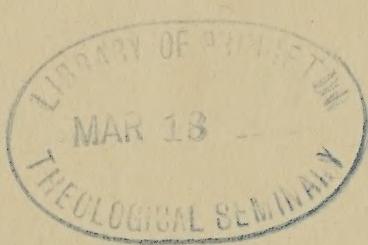




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The Song of Meditation

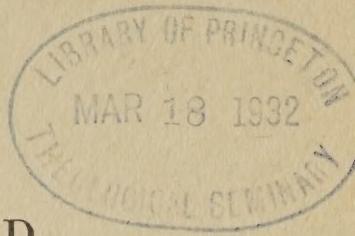
By
ROBERT MAC GOWAN, M.A., D.D.

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Religion," "Sympathy," etc.*)

With Introduction by
JAMES H. SNOWDEN, D.D., LL.D.



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To My Wife,
HELYN OSBORNE WEDDELL HENRY,
My Inspiration and Co-worker
Since My University Days.

INTRODUCTION

*By James H. Snowden, D.D., LL.D., Editor of
"The Presbyterian Banner."*

WE ARE in danger, in the rush and roar of this high-speed, strenuous age, of losing the fine art of meditation. Everybody is in a hurry, and few take time to get acquainted with themselves. Many are always craving a crowd, itching for a new thrill. Left alone, they are instantly discontented, and grow morbid and miserable. Having no inner resources, they are not their own best company. Such a life is shallow, feverish and fretful, and ends in bitter disappointment. Its roots have no depth of earth, and so it does not grow strong and fruitful.

We must live our life inwardly before we can live it outwardly. The architect puts his building up from foundation to finish—in his own mind, in his plans and in minute specifications—before he erects it in steel and stone. The artist must see his picture in the gallery of his imagination before he can copy it on canvas. The inner preparation may be long and the outer execution short. The wheatfield lies out in the shower and sunshine for weeks and months, absorbing nourishment out of its soil and gathering into its bosom golden beams from the sun, before it can ripen the seeds into golden grain. A meteor accumulates momentum through millions of invisible miles for the result of only one brief flash of splendor. A great surgeon said that if he had only three minutes for a critical operation he would take two to get ready. Jesus took thirty years of preparation in silence and solitude for three years of service. One must sit down and think and study a long while in order to get up

and teach or preach a little while. Wise living has its roots hidden in the silence which is the mother country of the strong. Jesus himself in his busiest days went at intervals "apart awhile," to renew his spiritual strength in prayer, rest his body and bathe his soul in the majesty of the mountain and the mystery of the sea.

My friend, the gifted author of this book, has a genius for brooding over things and getting into their secret. He has a mystic affinity with the inner nature and soul of things, in which reside their true meaning and deepest power. He knows how to get far from the madding crowd and hide his soul in solitude. When he is thus engaged in meditation the world opens and shows him wondrous things. The most commonplace bit of Scripture under his meditative insight begins to sparkle and glow with new meaning and vision. He sees how all things are related, and how any thread hanging loosely out of the general web of the world will begin to unfold near-and-far connections—and would in time unravel the universe. All things thus grow luminous and eloquent with spiritual truth and throw a new light on our path. He knows where the green pastures and still waters are and can lead us into them.

Our preacher is also a poet, as is abundantly evinced in these pages. He has the poetic insight to see the beauty and mystery that enmesh all things, the light that never was on sea or land and that suggests to us thoughts and feelings that are deeper than words, and may be too deep for tears. The poem attached to each meditation is a further illumination and enrichment of the theme and often gives the final touch that is perfection. In variety and melody and music these poems are a fine outflowering of the author's gift and are a help and inspiration to the reader. Not only is there true poetry in the poems, but a vein of poetic thought and expression runs through all the meditations and prayers and embroiders them with golden threads and imbues them with beauty.

A word, also, should be said for the prayers. These represent a difficult form of composition which elsewhere easily runs into stilted forms, grows highly artificial and lacks the devotional spirit. But the prayers printed here keep close to spiritual reality; they are filled with the breath of the Spirit and are yet simple and affectionate, and bear the soul up on the wings of aspiration.

The pages of this volume are not extemporaneous writing or speech, but are hammered gold and refined silver. They bear the marks of the artist's toil and touch. They are packed with ideas and sparkle with aphoristic expressions and crystallized diamonds of thought. They will bear slow reading and meditative digestion. So read, so absorbed and assimilated, they will pass into the mind and heart, to be the bread and water of life; and they will reappear in the strength and beauty of the soul and in the growth and fruitage of the life. Having myself read them with personal profit and pleasure, it is a privilege to commend them to others.

Pittsburgh, Pa.

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G O D

I

THE SONG OF MEDITATION

The meditation of my heart.—PSALM 19: 14.

THE singing of the heart is like the flow of water-brooks or as the sighing of summer winds through evergreen shrines. Deep within us all is the sacred lyre upon which the unseen Spirit strikes the music of life. Many and varied are the songs that He awakens and sweet the melody that pours itself through the years.

There is no such thing as absolute uniformity in the realm of meditation. We do not all meditate about the same things. Life is too complex for that. Some meditate upon their fortunes, others on their cares, and still others on their sins, until there happens a dangerous brooding that robs the soul of peace.

The words of the Psalmist are directive. He seems to say, "Let my reason, my will, my emotions be brought under thy control, that all my thoughts may be about thee, and for thy glory." He meditated upon God. To-day the mind has too much trivial diet. It is a starved calf of the stall. It feeds on straw. In the contemplation of God, an exercise almost abandoned in our busy age, the mind becomes strong and clean. Such meditation is a lake among the mountains, where the soul bathes and is purified from the contagion of the valleys.

He meditated upon the works of God. We are too little acquainted with nature today. It has been materialized to suit the biological monism of certain schools of thought, or it lies hidden under a blanket of fog from the mills. Lift up your eyes to the hills, he would tell us, for there is God's footstool.

He meditated on life. In God's presence he understood the mystery of suffering and saw the triumph of righteousness. From such reflections came his songs of the spirit.

THE SONG

*A song there is whose gentle cadence woos me
From toil and play and from my dreams away,
And when the flaming eyes of life accuse me,
I have sweet words to say.*

*To find the great Unknown that sings about me
And soothes the sad complaint of mortal woe,
I would refuse the tinsel scenes that flout me
And to His valleys go.*

*When in my garden roses are a-Juning,
And yellow bees hum through the golden hours,
The soft winds lilt a song their pipes a-tuning
In chorus with the flowers.*

*Oh! 'tis the melody of heaven above me,
The little song of birds, the laugh of spring,
The bountiful desire of them that love me,
The good in everything.*

PRAAYER

OH Spirit unseen, how do I thank Thee for gentle thoughts that float through my mind like laden ships upon a sunny sea! Where love abides no unseemly desire can long remain. Oh Thou who art Love Eternal, fill Thou the thirsty streams of my life with the water of Thy Spirit so pure and refreshing. Clothe me about with the rich mantle of mercy and help me to walk unafeard through the strife of life. Help me to be in my heart what I would be amongst my fellows,—gracious, strong, and forbearing, and when I am tempted to be cold and critical help me to remember Him who said,—“Neither do I condemn thee.” Give me for my daily companion life’s spirit of venture and I shall find Thee in every fragrant flower, and hear Thy voice in every wind that blows. Amen.

II

WHO IS GOD?

Who is a God like unto thee?—MICAH 7: 18.

THREE are three types of mind represented in these words. One stops at the very first word. What is all this talk about the unseen? There is no evidence. All nature lives and dies. Humanity suffers agelong agonies. An interminable silence answers the call of need. Why, then, speak of an unseen Presence? The case is not so easily closed. The Creator has left unmistakable signs of His love in the material universe. Within the sinful heart of man His voice is never silent, and in the message of Jesus there is gracious confirmation of the deepest longings of faith. Who? His name is whispered by mind and matter alike.

The second type asks—Who is God? Many answers are offered. He is Energy. But energy, even in its most rudimentary form, is found yoked to an idea. It is organized. How can this be? He is Force, says another, like dynamite scattering the rocks. But this is not the highest element in life, and does not appeal to the deepest within me. Is He, then, Intelligence? This is a step further. But it is an abstraction that cannot compel the warm ardor of my affections. All such answers leave the soul in darkness.

The third type speaks of a God “like unto thee.” This is a personal God to whom I can direct my prayers. He is a God of experience, for the centuries have proved His unfailing goodness. Micah’s description is twofold; He is righteous, for He punishes sin, and He is merciful, for He pardoneth iniquity. Soon we hear Jesus say, “Father in Heaven.” He is still the Eternal, Almighty God, but He is my Father, whose love is life and whose presence is victory. This is not a God. He is my God.

MY GOD

*Why tell me to love what I cannot love,
Or fear what I may not fear!
If God be a monarch in realms above,
Like a slave I shall grovel near.*

*If God be the Father of all mankind,
Like a child I shall hasten in
With the fairest gifts that I can find,
And a sob for the tale of sin.*

*For God is not the Lord of the dead,
But a living God is He;
And His life with the life of earth is wed
For the eyes of a soul to see.*

PRAYER

O H, living Father, we beseech Thee to be very patient with our blindness. Afraid of Thee, we miss the joyful fellowship of Thy love, and doubting Thee we toil lonely and weary, knowing not that Thou art waiting near to bless. Open our eyes, dear Lord, that we may see Thy gracious presence filling earth and sky. Open our hearts that they may be flooded with the abundance of Thy good gifts. Forgive our stubborn unbelief, and like winter fleeing before the warm sunlight so may our doubts take wing and trouble us no more. Reveal to us the glory of Jesus. Teach us His secret. May we be willing to wait until we learn of Him, and in His quiet assurance help us to find life strong, abundant, and pure. Amen.

III

THE ETERNAL GOD

I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.—EXODUS 3: 15.

IN order to know God it is necessary to have a name for Him. Of course, no single word can ever adequately convey the personality of God to the world, yet such words are enough to suggest His personality, individuality and spirituality. He is the living God. Many can only think of His plenitude, independence, absoluteness and power in the significant word "I am." Union with such a being is next to impossible, and unbelief is therefore largely due to an inadequate knowledge of the being, attributes and purposes of God. One truth is plain, it is necessary to see God as Creator before it is possible to know Him as Redeemer. Natural and spiritual must be the necessary complements of each other.

Yet it is wrong to find God in nature first. The personal element in religion is paramount. This is the distinctive feature of our text. It speaks of the adaptability of God. God suits Himself to every age and every experience. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were men of different times and ideals, and for them all there was one Teacher and Guide. This is what we mean by the eternity of God. As an abstraction, it is incomprehensible. As an experience, it is the greatest achievement of the mind. He is the ever-present One. Across the centuries we see lives half lived, remnants of beautiful designs, truths half born. Our own frailty shocks us, the long vista of change and decay staggers us, but the thought of God possesses us. He is, as always, in command. As He was with Abraham, so will He be with us. God is as men have proved Him through the ages—Creator, Redeemer and Friend.

A PRAYER

*Lead me, my Lord, for I am weak and faint.
The way is long and weary. Soon the night
Will hold me fast. Yet shall I trust the light
That ever shineth, till the dawning paint
The promise of a fairer noon. Ah, holy saint,
Lean on thy faith and let no foes affright.
Hope on, and love, the ills of life despite,
Will make a royal robe of thy complaint.*

*Oh, let me climb above the weeping waves,
For I am wrestling in a tideless sea,
Until I rest upon the rock that saves,
And seek no other than the Cross and Thee.*

*Strengthen me, Lord, that I my load endure,
Above all else of Thy leal love most sure.*

PRAYER

WE praise Thee, oh God, for the testimony of our fathers. Through the wilderness Thy hand led them and in the joy of Thy presence they found their promised land. Thy love was their strength by day and Thy peace their refuge by night. In the lonely ways of failure Thy right hand sustained them and in their foolish wanderings Thy grace wooed them to Thy heart again. We thank Thee, Father, for the rich heritage of their faith and service. Out of the past the voice of their praise arises and we would join with them our voices in holy acclamation, for Thou art the God of our salvation. Glory be to Thy name, oh God, who art the same yesterday and today and forever. Amen.

IV

WHERE TO FIND GOD

The secret place of the Most High.—PSALM 91: 1.

IF there were no secret places there would be no mysteries and without the element of mystery life loses much of its appeal and romance. Religion has its secret place, and certain words used by the Psalmist guide us in our search for it and understanding of it.

Its location. It is wherever the “Most High” is to be found. These are ancient words and to the Hebrew were poetical and symbolical. The upper atmosphere is much purer than the smoke-laden valleys. Jehovah is remote from the sins and follies of men, though He lends His aid to all who seek Him. In their attempt to democratize God some have almost succeeded in identifying Him with the vices of our age. God is not just one of ourselves. He is the “Most High,” and His secret place is holy and undefiled.

Its nature. The Psalmist does not say “In the secret place with the Most High.” The secret place is the Most High. He Himself and none other is our refuge. The Church is not the secret place, however impressive, nor yet the place of your private devotions; it is not even the Holy Book from which you draw encouragement. It is purely spiritual. “He dwelleth not in temples made with hands.” This is not a reality to physical sense, but the spiritual contact is none the less real. You may associate such nearness to God with certain localities or persons, but the essential thing is the spiritual contact with the Unseen.

The approach to it. The soul does not need to go far to find this secret place. It is not located on any map known to man. Laboratories and séances will not bring us there. Here and now our minds may find Him. Jesus is the Way. Tell Him your love and desire. Give all to Him, and the secret place will become an immediate reality.

SUBMISSION

*Where Thou dost lead, Lord, thither would I follow,
A humble soul that knoweth not the way,
For without Thee the heart of life is hollow,
And tasteless treasures spoil the toiler's day.*

*Help me to know that Thou art found unfailing,
Where human need cries out above the din
Of work and pleasure, and Thou art assailing
With all good men the tyrant hosts of sin.*

*Then shall I do the duty here beside me,
And in Thy spirit grace the days with love,
My dearest wish,—an unseen hand to guide me,
My richest gold,—the summer suns above.*

*Seek not my soul the loveless adulation.
'Tis but a shadow e'er the night will fall.
Hope thou in God with earnest expectation,
And be thou swift to hear when love shall call.*

PRAYER

OUR Father, in Thy presence help us to be still. Deliver us from the spirit of contention. Having the hearing ear and the understanding heart let our yea be yea and our nay, nay. Teach us to respect the opinions of others and to acknowledge our debt to those who have gone before us. May we not underestimate or despise those who may not have had our advantages but rather see good in the humblest. Let us not be wise in our own conceits nor despise the gifts within us, but taught of Thee, with patience and courage let us prove our words by our deeds. We are Thy children, Father, and Thy name is Peace. So let us bear Thine image, through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

V

GOD IN NATURE

Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens.

—PSALM 36: 5, 6.

WHEN we view a famous picture our reaction is that we would like to meet the artist. Who would not like to meet the great Architect of the Universe!

The sky is all-enfolding. Much of the earth is forbidden. Palaces and vast estates are closed but the heavens are free. Across the blue expanse our eyes may travel at will. It reaches everywhere also, into orchards and rose gardens, and into slums and alleys as well. The love of God, like the golden sky, is the heart's escape from the drudgery and mystery of life.

His faithfulness is in the clouds. The word means loyalty and trustworthiness. God keeps His promises. His love can be trusted. He made us physical and He feeds us; mental and He teaches us; heart-sick and He loves us. His love reaches to the clouds of sin that He may forgive and to the clouds of sorrow for He is our shelter from the storm. This is the strong support of the soul,—“God is faithful.”

His righteousness is like the great mountains. They seem to be eternal, standing high above the shifting sands. So the will of God never grows old. Amid the uncertainty of our time and its changing systems, “Thus saith the Lord” abides forever. The mountains are a refuge, as David knew well. So, when the standards of the world are in ruins, we come again to find eternal truth in God.

His judgments are a great deep. The mind reels as we gaze far down into the valley from the mountain-tops. So God's dealings with man, His government of the world, His providential love are all beyond our understanding,—but His love endures. We believe in Him and all is well.

THE VALLEY

*Oh Thou that art the dark in mystery
And light as morning in Thy precepts clear,
In this broad valley lone I feel Thee near,
Thy voice to hear, Thy bounty plain to see.
Like the strong mountains would Thy servant be,
Steadfast and sure amid the changing year,
When fiercely thunders roll, that know no fear,
And from whose haloed brow the shadows flee.*

*Or like this brook that sings of love to man
From glade to glade by town and hamlet lone,
Obedient partner in the age-long plan
Till life shall be as perfect as Thine own.*

*Make my sun's setting as the rising, Lord,
That earth may praise the glory of Thy word.*

PRAYER

WE praise Thee, oh God. Thy throne is in the heavens, Thy footsteps upon the waves of the mighty deep, and the clouds are Thy chariots. All about us Thy presence is made known to such as seek Thee. How beautiful are Thy works and how mysterious the infinite space that surrounds us. Let us not, therefore, bow down before Thy handiworks to worship. They must pass away in the purpose of Thy will, but Thou art the same yesterday and today and for ever. Thou God of the stars, we have known Thee by Thy mighty works, but in Jesus Christ, our Lord, we have learned to love Thee. Thou art far and yet near, strong and yet gentle, glorious and yet kind. We trust Thee, and therefore do we love, serve and worship Thee with all our hearts. We bow before the High God for we, too, are the works of Thy hands. Amen.

VI

THE NATURE OF GOD

Everyone that doeth righteousness is born of him.

I JOHN 2: 29.

ONE is struck in reading these verses with John's enthusiasm for righteousness. Christianity was beginning to face the forces of paganism, rationalism, and Judaism. It had to explain itself, and in the attempt to do so many of the greatest thinkers of the time misstated and distorted the truth beyond all recognition. Christianity became a philosophy instead of an experience. John says it is all a mighty delusion. A full brain is no substitute for a clean heart. Zeal for knowledge will not excuse any neglect of righteousness. This one thing it is necessary to know concerning God,—that He is righteous. This is the principle at the heart of Calvary. God did not crucify Christ. Sin did it. Calvary measures the difference between right and wrong. It is more, it is the symbol of what God has been doing since the beginning,—bearing the sins and sorrows of mankind upon His own heart. In the agony of Jesus we see the willingness and the readiness of God to save men. Calvary is the extreme measure of the love and the righteousness of God. Righteousness is the general name for actions that spring from love. John says nothing new when he writes that God is righteous, but to say that "God is love" is to reach the summit of all revelation. Then God is almighty, for love is the greatest power in the universe; He is eternal, for love never dies; He is righteous, for love seeks the highest good of the object of its desires.

The idea of power in God's nature lies nearest to the mind. Then we are afraid of God. To know that He is righteous is the next step in the education of the soul. Sometimes that knowledge is dearly bought. The last step comes when the angels sing,—"God is Love." It is the great indwelling element in the world,—the source of all human greatness.

WORSHIP

*To rest in quiet at the feet of God,
While sin struts proudly through the streets abroad,
And ribald crowds his shameless deeds applaud,
Is to be humbled low.*

*To gaze in wonder round the Holy Place
And here and there His love to mortals trace;
To read the record of eternal grace
Is all the truth to know.*

*To bow before Him heart and mind afame
With glowing love, that yields His lordly claim;
To give Him all that human heart can name
Is in His life to grow.*

PRAYER

FATHER, I thank Thee for the joy of silence. Through the unseen doors I pass out of the noises of the street and from the confusion of my own thoughts. Here Thou only art heard to speak and the quietness is full of pleasant dreams. My wondering mind has found the Light that never fades, and every moment is an eternity. Here, oh my God, the mysteries of earth are revealed and my soul finds in Thee the center of all truth and love. I cannot hasten when I am with Thee. There is a pause while I kneel in meditation and it is good to be there. Teach me Thy silence, Lord, that I may be calm when the tempest comes down, and patient when the anger of man rails against me. Take me often away with Thyself alone that in the silent discourse of Thy fellowship I may find wisdom and peace. This is the gate of heaven to my soul. Amen.

VII

THE CYCLE OF GOD

The wind returneth again according to his circuits.

—ECCLESIASTES 1: 4-9.

THE infinite sum of things—Eternity—is a circle to which God alone has given bounds. Within that circle proceeding from the same center and with an ever-increasing radius stand the circles of the world's history. Nature shows us God's general plan of creation. Think of the roundness of the world, trees, stars, horizon, oceans, rivers, fields and mountains. The line of beauty is the line of curve, and the law of circularity prevails everywhere in nature. There is harmony and arrangement among the creative forces of the universe.

This law appears in the development of life as well. God did not follow the shortest distance between two points in producing such infinite variety of existence, as we may learn from the fossiliferous strata under our feet. The circle of life has been ever widening.

This may also be seen in the movements of time. Morning, noon and night! Why should there be night? Because night is nature's restorer and even flowers must sleep. Why winter, then? Winter is the cradle where seasons are nurtured. The life of the flower passes back into the bulb or forward into the seed and so the tale repeats itself.

Here, too, is the story of man's life. Circulation, reflex action, motory circuits of thought! Life is never like a straight line. Yet is there not mere repetition. There is an expanding circle of experience.

We say that history repeats itself. The Fall and the Deluge are not isolated facts in history. Rather are they symbols of catastrophe for mankind in all ages, and yet Assyria, Rome, Egypt left the world richer by their death than by their life. Retrogression is the one inevitable condition of progress.

THE CIRCLE

*Only a little while
The tale to tell,
A tear, a song, a smile,
And then farewell.*

*Only a bloom or two
From love's sweet bower,
That I have plucked for you,
My fairest flower.*

*Only a kiss to keep
My faint heart bold,
And then the long, long sleep
Where hearts are cold.*

PRAYER

UPON Thee, oh Father, my will depends; to Thee my mind inclines, and for Thee my heart longs. Out of the night of ignorance I cry for light and from the struggle of life I come to Thee for rest. From Thee my life has come and to Thee it will return again. How dark it is behind and before, but there is peace according as I trust in Thee. Help me to be patient amid the mystery that surrounds, but ever teach me to hear more clearly the voice of Thy Spirit. My folly is my faithlessness, and my happiness my trust. Show me Thy way, oh Lord, and lead me as in the days of old. As my eyes grow dim, may Thy light be clearer and Thy love more real. Then when the darkness falls, there will be no loneliness, for light and dark are both alike to Thee. Amen.

VIII

A GRACIOUS GOD

By grace are ye saved.—EPHESIANS 2: 8.

LET no one doubt the love of God. He does not ask that we should merit His love. It is because there is sin that there is grace, and because men and women are so helpless, this grace is free.

Consider how the Apostle illustrates this truth. He makes a series of contrasts. First,—grace and debt. We are debtors to those who sacrificed to make us what we are. We are debtors to our friends and neighbors, whose fellowship sweetens our sorrow. We are debtors to nature from whose abundance we grow rich and strong. How much more are we debtors to God from Whom cometh every good gift! No money can ever pay for love. There is a debt which we can never wipe from life's balance sheet. What shall we do with our debt to God? Spiritual bankruptcy mocks our best efforts. He must forgive. It is grace that cancels our debt.

Secondly,—grace and works. If we were absolutely perfect, then would we be equal with God, and grace would be unnecessary. But, oh, the wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores of the world's heart. This is not the verdict of the degenerates. It is written in the consciences of the best men. It is the message of the greatest literature in all ages. It is the voice of the centuries. "All we like sheep have gone astray." We have all sinned. Again it is grace that forgives and saves.

Thirdly,—grace and law. The law says, "Go,"—grace says, "Come." The former is good advice,—the latter is good news. The law came in thunder, smoke, and fire. Grace came through Calvary. Mystery hangs around the Cross, but there is forgiveness. There the human heart meets with God.

THE CROSS

*Ah, no proud boast His peaceful lips defiled,
No sob disgraced, no servile sigh outran
Divine imperative. But like a child,
“When ye have lifted up the Son of Man,”
He taught His own. Reproach unspoken there
Saw ignorance in riot everywhere.*

*The Cross became His throne and sorrow crowned
With sacrifice His royal brow; and lands
As ages passed were healed. The nations found
A wondrous charm beneath His piercèd hands;
And worlds drunk with the blood of men and fierce
Awoke: for love compels and thorns can pierce.*

*Oh prophets of the Lord’s diviner plan
Illumine Calvary: “Behold the Man.”*

PRAYER

FAATHER, Thou art great in compassion, and oh, how our hearts cry for Thee night and day. How easily we fall a prey to the low desires of our nature and how feeble is the battle we fight for truth and right. We would not blame others nor any circumstances of life for our fall. We have sinned. Oh, God, help us in our weakness. We would be noble, pure, and honorable, but alas how imperfect is our attainment. Be near to help. Leave us not, oh Lord, to perish, but in the evil hour grant us the victory. We believe in Him who said, “I have overcome the world.” Father, let us share His victory, that we may be like Him in character and service. Amen.

IX

THE GOODNESS OF GOD

The Lord is good and he knoweth them that trust in him.—NAHUM 1: 7.

The Lord knoweth them that are his.

—II TIMOTHY 2: 19.

GOD and man,—the Bible has no other interest. These two words bring us face to face with the greatest questions that ever humbled the heart of man. At once we agree with the prophet. God knows and man trusts. Our knowledge is hazy and inadequate. We see through a glass darkly. There is no finality for man. But who would dare set bounds to the wisdom and knowledge of God! He holds the seas in the hollow of His hands, and the centuries have told their secrets to Him. But greatest of all He knows each one of us. He understands us as no other ever can, and better than we do ourselves (I Samuel 13: 14). “God looketh on the heart.” Often we are a problem to others, else why do they talk about us so idly! And generally we are a bigger problem to ourselves. But God is never surprised. He knows our nature, our circumstances, our strength, and our weakness. He sees the end from the beginning.

To some hearts this is a terrifying thought. He has searched us and tried us. We can hide nothing from Him. What an experience! Remember, then, the first words of the prophet, “God is good.” Conscience thunders our guilt into our ears, but the Lord kindly constrains and compels us by the violence of His Love. The word “trust” sums up our relation to Him. In the heart of the Eternal there is peace. Sometimes our faith is in bondage. The light within us flickers and dies away. Did you ever think that God made the darkness, too? Out of the cloud He spake to His people and life’s great experiences,—its sorrows, decisions, failures and victories are the encircling mists out of which we come stronger, more subdued, and more earnest for our communion with God.

TODAY

*My cup is foaming to the brim.
The breath of even is a hymn
 To lull my soul to pray.
Low in the vale the light is dim,
 And I have loved today.*

*Each day is my companion sweet,
Whom I am always glad to meet
 For he has much to say.
Let shallow hearts the future greet,
 I walk with my today.*

*Tomorrow may be brighter still,
No mists upon the towering hill
 To foil my favored way.
The morn a thousand cups may fill,
 But thank God for today.*

PRAYER

FATHER, I thank Thee for the happiness that has made life so worth while. Thou hast given me precious gifts innumerable for mind and body, and above all the joy of knowing and serving Jesus my Savior. "Goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life." I thank Thee also for what Thou hast denied me. How little do I know what is for my good! Often have my prayers been unanswered lest Thy favor should feast my vanity, and through the darkness have I come that I might learn to love the light. Yet do I thank Thee for the lure of the unattainable,—that there is ever another height to climb. Help me to strive that I may attain, and to see beyond the boundaries of sense the day of Thy kingdom. Gracious Lord, let me not grow weary in the struggle, but rather let Thy will be done in me, until I come to the stature of the perfect man in Christ Jesus. Amen.

X

THE SALVATION OF GOD

Salvation belongeth unto the Lord.—PSALM 3: 8.

THIS great man was surrounded by enemies seeking his life. They mocked him, saying, "there is no help for him in God." How simple yet how strong is his faith! Its strength lies in its simplicity. His is the prayer of a little child when the dark night falls. "I laid me down and slept." Such is the answer of calm, humble, courageous faith to the taunts of an over-confident enemy.

Here is man's need summed up in a word,—salvation. Sin is a storm devastating the fair garden of the soul,—a plague blighting its simplicity, purity, and beauty,—an enemy seeking its downfall continually. Guilt is a leprosy which only the love of God in Christ can cleanse. And none can escape it. "We all have sinned." What of this in the light of eternity? No wonder it is said, "The sting of death is sin." Is our hope in ourselves? Our failures mock us. Jehovah saves.

In Christianity two things are inseparable,—man's need and God's love. It is this love which makes salvation possible. Love gives and forgives. Wounded, it kisses the hand that dealt the wound. Sinned against, it loves the sinner still. We are to blame, not because we are weak, but because we have sinned. Have you discovered your need,—the sinfulness of sin? Look to Calvary. That bleeding love will inspire you with a deeper sorrow for sin, a deeper sense of forgiveness, and a deeper love for Him who died.

Faith must be simple as a child's. Who can tell the mystery of the relationship between Christ's death and my sin? Jesus said it, and I believe it. Oh, that the world knew more of His power to save!

COME UNTO ME

*I bowed my head when hope had fled.
My lonely heart was numb and cold,
And when my tears the anguish told,
"Come unto Me," the silence said.*

*Upon the street, with busy feet
I fled the sorrow in my soul,
And where the crowds unheeding roll
A voice said, "Come," in accents sweet.*

*Into the wood where shadows brood
I took my weary heart one day.
"Oh come" I heard the soft winds say,
And there the lonely stranger stood.*

*Ah, then I knew with vision true
The Holy Man of Galilee,
And, when I bowed my stubborn knee,
His blessing fell like morning dew.*

PRAYER

OUR Father, who art the center of all truth and love, receive from our unworthy hands, we entreat Thee, the service that we offer each day. Alas, that it should be so small. We have failed Thee in the crowded marts and in the places of our pleasure. We deplore our forgetfulness. We are unprofitable servants. But, Father, help us above all to examine our motives. Even when we would do Thee honor, we are self-seeking and vain. Cleanse us from our wicked way that we may not stain our gifts with selfish ambition. All that we have is Thine and in our service of Thee we would wait for Thy guidance, and trust in the strength which Thou alone canst give. Amen.

XI

THE RICHES OF GOD

Strengthened with might. Rooted and grounded in love. Able to comprehend.—EPHESIANS 3: 16-19.

AN organ plays,—sweetness, volume, harmony, mingling in charming proportion. We say, “Glorious,” but the trained ear can tell every stop as it is pulled out. So Paul analyzes the glory of God. God is not rich because He is a great landowner. Though He be a millionaire in worlds, that is no reason why men should believe in Him. The outstanding features of the glory of God are His power, wisdom, and love.

The first we can easily see. He is Maker of Heaven and earth. He controls the growing purpose in history, and His new creation in the souls of men is yet in the making. The instrument by which God works in human experience is His Holy Spirit, and His objective is the spirit in man. In that spiritual realm all may know the power of God. Let the spirit be unawakened, and the holy altars of the soul are desecrated. When God comes His spirit brings life, and the temple of the soul is rebuilt.

Strength without knowledge is ignorance,—destructive and terrible. “Strong to comprehend!” God wants us to cultivate the faculty of perception. The sailor can see a ship where you can only see water. The shepherd can distinguish every sheep in the flock, where you can see no difference. Would that our spiritual vision were as quick and accurate! Wisdom is the power to employ the dynamic of God. Some leaders today harness their schemes to the prejudices and lower passions of men. Let us harness ours to the energy of God.

Love found its most glorious expression on Calvary, and in the perfect blending of these three is found the glory of God. Such is Jesus.

LIFE ETERNAL

*Oh God unseen I offer Thee
All that I am, and naught withhold.
Help me to grasp with fingers bold
The life that Thou hast given me.*

*This life eternal is my own.
I journey where I cannot see.
'Tis childhood's fancy pure and free
To higher forms divinely grown.*

*For this new realm is not a star
Lost in unknown infinity;
'Tis in me, round me, nearer far
Than all I touch, or taste, or see.*

*And in the long communion blest
I only am what I may give,
I know but only as I live
Yielding the baser for the best.*

PRAYER

O H, my Saviour, I would abide in Thee. Help me to know the continuance of the Christian life. Alas, my following of Thee has been occasional and my fellowship fragmentary. I have doubted only to wander in darkness and my forgetfulness has been my stone of stumbling. Help me to walk daily with Thee and conscious of Thy pleasant company I shall be the bearer of blessing to my fellows. May no other interest claim my heart, and no other adventure my will. Send me forth with fresh courage to endure unto the end, and in the quiet of Thy secret place amid the turmoil of the struggle may this assurance be my strength—that I abide in Thee. Fill my breast, oh Lord, in increasing measure with Thy Spirit, and my life will be my witness that Thou art with me. Amen.

XII

THE PEOPLE OF GOD

God hath chosen thee to be a special people.

—DEUTERONOMY 7: 6.

A REFORMER'S worth to the world can be tested by his conception of man. If man be but an animal, then he may become fat and remain filthy. If he be only an intelligence, he may be made clever and yet conscienceless. If he be treated as purely and entirely spiritual, his improvement may end in sentiment,—a city in the clouds with no counterpart on earth. How human is Moses in his approach to this whole problem!

Israel must be "an holy" people. This word connotes separateness in the Hebrew. The Holy of Holies, for example, was preserved from the defiling presence of sinful men. Holiness was a barrier beyond which the people could not pass. For the same reason Sinai was forbidden to all but Moses; aye, and in this very chapter the logical conclusion of such a principle is illustrated, for in order to protect Israel the Canaanites were to be utterly destroyed.

Christianity has made a difference. "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world." The holy man must still deny himself and take his cross, but it is only that he may the better lead others into the knowledge of the Savior. Again, they were to be a "peculiar" people. This signifies all that we mean by private property. What is your very own you care for diligently, and it soon bears the mark of your personality. So has God dealt with man through the ages. Alas, for the sins of men bringing grief, shame and death. Yet have there always been a multitude in whose lives the glory and the goodness of God have been revealed. And they are the salt of the earth in every age.

They were also a "beloved" people, and this is God's one reason for all His dealings with men and women. Love gives its best. He gave His only begotten Son.

PATIENCE

*Teach me the calm that soothes the even cool,
The sweet content of nature 'neath the snow,
The silent fullness of the trembling pool,
Where water lilies grow.*

*Show me the patience of the roses born
To bloom awhile,—a lonely world's delight,
Kissed by the dewdrop on the lips of morn,
Then withered low at night.*

*Help me amid the sufferings of men
To walk as surely as the shadows there,
And sing the joy of hope's return again
Through caverns of despair.*

*Here is my place of service. I shall seek,
Undaunted by the vagrant fear and shame,
To follow fame along the dizzy peak,
Or die without a name.*

PRAYER

O H, gracious Father, we thank Thee for the company of our dear ones,—for bright youth and temperate age. Help us to put far from us all jealousy, envy and strife, that love may harvest the ripe fruits of loyalty, sincerity and joy. May we seek each other's good, finding our sweetest joy in mutual service. Sleeping or waking, let Thy protecting arms be about us, and the years will find us growing in the likeness of our Father in heaven. Gather us at last in that better home on high where we shall be forever one. Amen.

XIII

THE TEMPLE OF GOD

The building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.—EPHESIANS 2: 20-22.

THE Ephesians were very proud of their magnificent Temple of Diana,—a gem of the most costly material and excellent workmanship. It had been burned down by a madman and the citizens vied with one another in their efforts to replace the gorgeous edifice. The building to which Paul refers, God is erecting out of the ruins of sin-stricken humanity.

Do not mistake the word “Church.” It is used well over a hundred times in the New Testament, but never to mean buildings of stone and lime. God’s dwelling-place is in the hearts of men and women, and this building which we call the Church is the great community of believing souls.

The foundation, according to Paul, is the testimony of apostles and fathers. Through them the Gospel has reached us. We follow them as they followed Jesus, and the best support which Christian people can give to the Church is the upright life, loving devotion, and patient suffering. This is the rock upon which He builds.

Christ is the chief cornerstone. In the Temple some of the stones were of enormous size. Christ is the chief,—not the topmost but at the most important point, at a difficult angle or on the edge of a cliff. So must the Church depend on Jesus. Without Him the building goes to pieces.

The purpose of this building is that it be the holy dwelling-place of Jehovah. Yet is He not confined to temples made with hands. They who follow Jesus are the temples of the spirit and God dwelleth in them. This is only possible by abiding in Him and being transformed into His beautiful image.

Cathedrals crumble to decay. Sometimes they fall a prey to man’s lust. But the building of God is eternal.

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

*Bride of the King, the nations view
The Christ in thee through ages all.
Ah tender be thy heart, and true
Thy Dear One to recall!*

*If He be absent, wait. Again
With holy sorrow hope to meet.
His coming through the shadows then
Thy glowing eyes will greet.*

*Keep thou thy heart for One alone!
No dread intruder steal thy smile!
And oft beside love's humble throne
The silent hours beguile.*

PRAYER

OH, loving Father, give me a sense of Thy gracious presence all about me. Thine eyes are upon me, and my sin is known to Thee, but oh, how blessed it is to feel that Thou art here not to condemn but to forgive, and to guard me against all evil. Oh, Savior of men, who didst bear the anguish of temptation for me, grant me Thy fellowship as I struggle against the evil one. I am as the smoke scattered by the gale when Thou art not here. I lose my vision of the higher goal without Thee. Let me hear Thy voice only, my Lord, for then am I encouraged to suffer and be strong. Oh, Thou unseen ally of my soul, in Thee do I put my trust. Amen.

XIV

THE PRAISE OF GOD

Let such as love thy salvation, say continually,—Let God be magnified.—PSALM 70: 4.

THE Psalmist's joy is demonstrative and reasonable. It is not the silly effusion of infancy. He had lived life hard. At the very hour of writing the enemy is at the gates. He can hear their vile taunts. The vulgar laugh of verse three comes from a brutal heart. Yet he is assured of victory. Is this unholy mirth? Ah, no! for God is greater than all the ills of earth.

“Such as love thy salvation.” The last word here signifies victory. At that time victory in the field meant destruction of armies, acceptance of the conqueror's terms of peace, and passing under the yoke of the victor. When God conquers, it is that He may bring love and healing to the children of men. It is the victory of sun over shadow, of harvest over storm, of love over hate.

In the individual soul is this victory won. The enemies of God are many there. Does He give you strength to foil the tempter's power? Do you bend to His will, and plead for His blessing?

Aye, and history is the field of His victory. Time and again His cause has seemed to pass from the cross to the grave, but it has arisen triumphant over all. In our own day we can read the story clearly. God must triumph. Oh, let the nations hear!

But do we love His victory? The word for love means primarily to bend upwards from the plains like the mountains until they hide their heads in the heavens. Do our hearts move up to God like this today? Be not stinted in your praise,—“Let God be magnified.” And say it again and yet again like the Psalmist, till its echo be heard over all the world.

MY STRENGTH

*Oh God, Thou art my strength and stay,
A clear Light brighter than the day
And never dim,
A loving Friend upon life's way,
Whose presence makes of toil and play
A ceaseless hymn.*

*How grateful is my heart to Thee!
I thank Thee, Lord, on bended knee
For all the good,
And plead that Thou wilt pity me,
Nor judge by what I fail to be,
But what I would.*

*Father, the mystery is deep.
Let me not think Thy silence sleep
Through endless time,
For as the ages onward creep,
Thy spirit to my soul will keep
The pledge sublime.*

PRAYER

MY soul is faint, Lord, with the thought of mortal need. How would I serve Thee in bringing others to a knowledge of Thy truth! but oh, I am not worthy to bear Thy name upon my lips. Purify me, rather, for Thy use! Cleanse me from every secret fault, and may my eyes behold, undimmed by selfish ambition, the triumph of Thy kingdom. Help me to unite with all good men and women in the service of Thy cause. Give all who labor for Thee a brotherly spirit that there may be no loss through strife or envy. Alas how few there be that give themselves in mind and body! Help me, then, to be a living sacrifice that my life may not be as a flower that fadeth early. Thou art my strength and with Thee the end is always victory. Amen.

XV

GOD ON TRIAL

Prove me now, saith the Lord of Hosts.—MALACHI 3: 10.

IT is necessary to prove God. He is unseen, unheard and untouched. The veil of flesh rebukes idle curiosity—only in the secret place of the soul, when the harsh noises are stilled, may His voice be heard. No idol can represent Him and no picture uncover His beauty. Why should it be necessary to seek after Him? For the same reason that we seek education. It stirs our faculties and develops character.

God invites such seeking. The prophet in this passage thinks of God after this fashion. He is not a puzzle which we may or may not discover. That is fatalism. Nor is religion a game of hide-and-seek in which God is somewhere near but entirely beyond our skill to find Him. This is agnosticism. It is no blind-man's-buff in which we stumble around till some one takes pity on us. This is atheism. God is ever revealing Himself even as I spell the phonetic syllables for my child. Mystery surrounds this Being but He is ever disclosing His secret to such as seek after Him if haply they may find Him. “Seek and ye shall find.”

This proof is varied. Nature is a beautiful picture. Do we know the artist? His will has all the proportion and symmetry of a classical design. Do we obey it? Jesus is the highest expression of His purpose for the world. Do we serve Him? Once upon a time they crucified Him. The trouble is with ourselves. We do not take time to prove Him. Science will help, for she discovers to our blind souls wonders beyond our dreams. Philosophy offers invaluable aid in her pursuit of the absolute. But Faith is the triumphant conqueror, for she enters into the unseen and takes for her own the treasures of heaven.

Is such a pursuit worth while? Try it and see.

THE CONFLICT

*Behold in search of transient fame
The knights of blasphemy and fraud
Enter the lists with loud acclaim
To try a tilt with God.*

*It is the careless cubist's glee,
With souls as barren deserts broad,
In sadly perjured form and fee
To take a fling at God.*

*Ah, God is substance,—not a shade
That wriggles from the lightning rod.
He is the light that doth not fade,
But say it softly,—God.*

*Ah, God is in the summer rain,
And cerulean sky,
And earth would be a void again
Should God Almighty die.*

PRAYER

UNTO the hills would I lift up my eyes. Thy dwelling-place is in the heavens. Yet art Thou near to whisper Thy love to every waiting heart. Praise be unto Thee, oh Lord, for the sense of Thy presence in the secret place of my soul. Help me to prove Thy boundless love and Thy willingness to bless in the trials of life. My mind has found Thee in the world around my feet, and my heart in the strong faith of Thy nearness amid the necessities of the days. Still more clearly would I see Thee. Draw me closer to Jesus my Lord that I may learn His secret and find the open way to Thy heart in His loving fellowship. Help me to be very sure of Thee, my God, until all my life is Thine. Amen.

XVI

THE HANDS OF GOD

My times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.

—PSALM 31: 15.

THIS is the utmost height to which faith can climb. It is the faith of maturity. There is no protest in it; just a noble acknowledgment of the unchanging goodness of God. It is not an attempt to explain the vicissitudes of life, but simply a personal understanding between the soul and its God, that all is well. A few verses above, when the Psalmist is in his darkest mood, he suddenly breaks out with the astonishing assertion,—“Thou hast put my feet in a large place.” Sorrow is a dungeon. Failure and worry are cruel chains, but faith is a palace. The grave is very narrow but the gates of heaven are wide.

There is no suggestion of fatalism here. That is to say, life is not so arranged that God can gamble with our fate. In ancient times the fates wove out human destiny without direction or discretion. Ah, but God deals with us as rational individuals. He would have us coöperate with Him to secure the end which He has in view, and in joy or in sorrow He is the same abiding Friend. There is always something in life which we cannot do for ourselves. God is the great alchemist, who purifies the atmosphere and fructifies the soil. He is the great architect, who plans the Kingdom of Heaven, and from whom come the visions of the better day, that visit the soul of man. And is He not in Christ the Redeemer so that evil is not allowed to wage successful war forever against the soul? Happy he whose times are in the Lord’s hands.

The words might be taken to mean the period of history in which he lived. So we speak of the signs of the times. It was a day of chaos and unbelief. Yet his faith holds. We must strengthen ourselves in this faith today. God’s Kingdom is coming in God’s way and in God’s time.

WORRY

*Worry is a witch upon a moor
In foulsome bogs her portion brewing, then,
When night falls, stealing 'mong the haunts of men,
Drugging with direful dreams the rich and poor.*

*Her fatal draught hath three ingredients sure.
Uncertainty and restlessness are first
Together stirred, and discontent accursed
Is later added. 'Tis a devil's cure.*

*What strength can stand against such treachery!
To drink is but to die. Base slaves are we.
Two angels then shall guard me night and day,—
Patience to pray and Hope to light the way.*

*I'll take my share of life and faithful be;
Then hags may come or go, my soul is free.*

PRAYER

FAITHER, how swift are the days in their flight, and how little we treasure their sacred hours. Our life is but a breath, so soon do we pass from scenes of childhood and age. The friends we loved are gathered to their fathers and we know them no more. The dreams that once enthused us fade from our memories. Young and old we meet the changes of fortune for good or ill and still the years move on. Help us to meditate upon the transitoriness of life. How brief it is and how sure is eternity! Well for us then, oh God, if we served Thee without stint, filling the hours of every day with earnest loving endeavor for Thy name's sake. Take, then, our moments and our days that under Thy direction we may serve Thee continually, and at the last in Thy good favor we shall rest with Thee forever. Amen.

XVII

IN RELIEF OF DOUBT

Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?

—LUKE 7: 19.

JOHN, humbled in prison, sought clearer light regarding Jesus. Not for a moment had he swerved from his original purpose. In contrast the multitudes had swung from John to Jesus, and in each case had expressed as little appreciation of the central truths for which both leaders stood. The Master's treatment of these two cases is instructive.

Jesus does not blame John for his inquiry. A dungeon is not a good place for a soul to grow in. Jesus entered into John's difficulties, and forcibly yet kindly sent the inspiring message, "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."

Honest doubt is justifiable. God will not shirk a question. But He has His answer always ready, if we have eyes to see. There is a right and a wrong way of asking a question. Some people seem too anxious to defend their doubts. It would be better to take God's side. It is not surprising that He does not answer those who are proud of their unbelief. It is remarkable that Jesus did not say directly "I am the Messiah." Further questions would have arisen. So does God leave men to think for themselves. There will be no rending of the clouds. The life lived in surrender to Jesus is sufficient proof of His power. The evidence is not in heaven nor in hades, nor at any given point of the compass, but in your own heart and mind.

Jesus is also very tender in His criticism of the multitude. They are "children sitting in the market-place." Yet His words are severe. They were spoiled children, whom nothing could please,—neither music nor mourning. John was a little impatient, but their ideals were all wrong. Many seekers err either because they seek the wrong things or because they seek in the wrong way.

THE CLEARER ROAD

*Belief is not the easy thing
That scoffers say.
The labored steps that slowly bring
Along the way
A seeking soul, not all men know,
The weary wait while shadows grow,
Trusting hard that morn will show
By clearer road
The hills of God.*

*Thrice happy he to whom is given,
Whoe'er he be,
Daily to ope the gates of heaven
For all to see
The golden gleam on snow clad hills,
And dancing light on rocks and rills.
The radiant earth His presence fills.
Such faith is joy,
Let none destroy.*

PRAYER

HEAVENLY Father, we thank Thee for the joy of quietness,—for the stillness of the woods, the privacy of prayer, the solitary wandering of the mind, for calm repose and for the soul's retirement amid the blare of business. Show me the way into Thy secret place, oh Lord, where the voices of earth are hushed. Oh, do Thou rebuke the riot of our words and the clash of our opinions. Speak Thou to the roaring furnace and the grinding wheel,—“Be still and know that I am God.” Then shall we hear Thy voice again when the giants of steel are sleeping. Teach us the secrets of the fields where Thy work is done in silence and Thy love is lived, not spoken. Oh, may we hear the sweet voice from Galilee, “Let not your heart be troubled.” How blessed are they that trust in Thee! Bring us at last into the eternal home where there is peace for ever more. Amen.

JESUS

XVIII

WHO IS JESUS?

Christ is God's.—I CORINTHIANS 3: 23.

IT would be quite impossible to recount all the conceptions of Jesus that have visited the minds of men during the centuries. It is not too much to say that vast numbers have been disappointed with Jesus. The Cross has remained a mystery to them without an appeal, an offence without an explanation. The difficulty has often been that many have formulated their own ideas as to just how God should reveal Himself. They tell Him what evidence they are prepared to accept or reject. Now, God has chosen to reveal Himself in Jesus, and to miss that revelation is to miss God.

Paul uses two words to define more accurately this phrase. Christ the power of God and the Wisdom of God, I Corinthians 1: 23, 24. The former we immediately expect to find in the very nature of the Divine. The memorials of God's might are everywhere around us. But where is there power enough to win the victory over sin, and to lift humanity up to God? It is in the Cross of Calvary. Christ is God's response to human need. Man's sin is a challenge to God. His answer is Calvary. There, amid the blood and pain, He says, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." The response of human hearts that bow before the Cross is repentance unto life. The greatest tragedy in the world is sin, and the only place where its darkness is dispelled is at Calvary. Jesus is the power of God.

He is also the wisdom of God. Life seems fragmentary and purposeless. Distracting forces tear the garment of the years to shreds. Science, in denying responsibility, does not take away the sting of disappointment, and philosophy, in relationalizing it, does not save us from its blight. God does not stand aloof. He gathers the loose threads and weaves a new robe of beauty in Jesus.

FAITH

*Walk Thou beside me, Jesus, keep my feet
All through the mountain track and weary street,
And I shall find in Thee my safe retreat
At noon or night.*

*Lord, when the angry world disturbs the air,
And friends forsake we hoped that time would spare,
When coldness and deceit frown everywhere,
A cruel blight,*

*Then be Thou near to whisper to my heart
“Come unto Me from all the world apart,”
And bright above the gloomy hills will start
The morning light.*

*For I must wander on through doubt and fear
With but Thy love to stay the struggling tear,
Till faith, that to my weakness proves Thee near,
Is lost in sight.*

PRAYER

OH, God of mercy, we beseech Thee to look in pity upon the suffering of mankind. Alas, for the millions that know no rest, hungry, diseased, stricken with fear! Let the heavens open that blessing may fall like dew upon the weak and the heavy laden. Touch our hearts so that, conscious of the world's need, we may do our best in Thy name to make the burden lighter. May we see Jesus as He walked in the cities of Galilee, healing the sick and feeding the hungry. Help us to carry His gospel far and near that the sorrows of the world may be relieved. Into the shadow of the Cross may the nations come that they may find healing for soul and body in the eternal love of God. Amen.

XIX

THE NAMES OF JESUS

That ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.—JOHN 20: 30-31.

THE one purpose of the Gospels is to show Jesus to the world. This is the name by which He was first known as a little child in Nazareth on His mother's knee and later as the man who was tempted in the desert, who prayed on the hillside, and who wept by the grave of His friend. This is the common starting-point for our understanding of Him. Born of a woman, made under the law, His human nature was real. He was the Son of Man.

But He was also Christ. Supremely man in the highest capacity and fulfilment of man's life in the present, so was He the fulfilment of the past. All truth led up to Him. Others were sparks of the divine flame. He was the fire. The priest after the order of Melchizedec, the prophet greater than Moses, the king greater than Solomon—God had anointed Him a different kind of Messiah from the caricature of popular expectation. He was the ideal Servant and therefore Master of all.

He was the Son of God. This was the fundamental fact in Christ's consciousness. "I and the Father are one," He said, and our Sonship is only realized in Him. Nothing can explain this away. Insanity, say some, but His teaching does not support that. Vanity, say others, but He said "I am meek and lowly in heart." Deceit, we are told, but the Cross still stands. Jesus was all He said He was and more than we can ever put into words. He stands complete only as Lord Jesus Christ.

What makes us believe this? Signs, says John, and the careworn world still loves Him, learns His will, and finds new life in His redeeming name.

LIFE LADEN

*It is a Soul with deep life-laden eyes
That gazes from yon gilded cross, for pain
The utmost toll of sacrifice had ta'en
Till flesh became as fragile as His sighs.
It is a Spirit from a world that lies
Beyond the dreams of sense, no guilty stain
To mar His brow, for ruthless men had slain
This comely visitant from Paradise.*

*How silent, yet how strangely eloquent
Those peaceful lips! Softly He calls to me
Alone, as from diviner spaces sent,
For I have long forgotten,—“Follow me.”*

*Pure as a lily in a rain soaked sod,
His raptured eyes behold the face of God.*

PRAYER

OH, Thou loving Comforter, we praise Thee for Thy gentle ministry of healing among the suffering children of men. Thy hand unseen is like the soft kiss of the sun in spring and from the couch of pain the tortured body is raised to new life. Into the night of our despair cometh the whisper of Thy consolation and our hearts take hope again. Never is the burden too heavy while Thou art near. Always the dawning beckons us at Thy coming to new scenes of beauty and new labors of love. And in the darkest hour of earthly anguish when we are left alone with our sorrow, Thy presence is as a cooling fountain where we taste relief. Oh, teach us how to enjoy Thy comfort of love, and amid the extremity of life's sorrow we shall be saved by the patience of hope. Amen.

XX

FAITH IN CHRIST

Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.—Acts 20: 21.

WHEN doubt assails we should remember the significance of faith to Jesus. "All things are possible to him that believeth." The promises in the sacred record are always given to the great believers. They are the conquerors, the martyrs, and the pioneers. These are they who ask great things of God, expect great things from God, and attempt great things for God.

What, then, is faith? It is not credulity with its big appetite for the miraculous and the magical? It is not superstition,—the recrudescence of prehistoric tendencies. To know the objective of faith is the first essential. According to the New Testament it is not faith that saves, but faith in Christ. To what aspect of His nature did Jesus turn the thoughts of His followers? Not to His body! It was human. Men did not know Him to be the Son of God when they passed Him on the streets. His divinity lay in His consciousness, in His ego, or to use a modern expression, in His selfhood. "I and the Father are one." Our faith, then, must correspond to the nature of its objective. It must be spiritual, inward, and personal. Arguments with regard to the physical nature of Jesus move one little, because they are materialistic and remote from human experience. Faith grasps the eternal element in the personality of our Lord, and emphasizes two things,—first, the authority, and second, the power of Jesus. Jesus has the authority of God for the conscience. Perfect life is inconceivable under any other conditions than His word allows. In that sense it is absolute and final. It promises also a transfigured life for the individual and a transformed state for the world. Oh, the unrealized possibilities of faith in Christ!

MY FAITH

*If heaven be but a dream
And faith is vain,
Then would I slumber on
And dream again.*

*If goodness end with time,
—No more to me
In death than river rhyme,—
I'll better be.*

*If love be crushed in scorn
Beneath man's store,
Deeper through night and morn
I'll love the more.*

*If mockers wreck the sky
And worship cease,
I'll guard with jealous eye
My faith's increase.*

*If loved ones call me not,
That tarry late,
Still, here on bended knee
I'll watch and wait.*

*If false the Christ I crave;
The joy He brings
Will make me willing slave
Of better things.*

PRAYER

LORD God of Hosts, amid the changing scenes of time we find Thee ever the same, loving and true. Thou art able to understand and help. May we walk oftener the road that leads to Thy presence. There is found blessing for all. Amen.

XXI

A LIVING FAITH

I know that my Redeemer liveth.—JOB 19: 25.

THE confidence of these words is inspiring. This suffering servant of God had wrestled long with the problem of his own failure. It was little comfort to know that others suffered like himself, or that the wicked who seemed to prosper, were hastening to destruction. His only hope comes like a glimmer at first, but it shines more brightly with the passing hour,—“ I know that my Redeemer liveth.” It is the triumphant alternative of faith,—the same cry which has come from the fires of martyrdom, the fearful prisons, and the shades of death in all ages,—that faith which counts God more than friends, or home, or children, even life itself, and before which death has lost its sting and the grave its victory. In these words Job accepted his lot, renewed his trust, and read the meaning of his life.

Life’s sorrow is not the outcome of caprice, for all have their share, irrespective of character, color, or clime. It is universal. Pain is charged with a mission. In the Eastern cults the only possible attitude is resignation. There is no hope,—no consolation. But the Christian says, “ I know that my Redeemer liveth.” He says “ Yea ” to God, not simply, “ It must be, I cannot help it,” but rather, “ God’s way is the best.” This is my discipline to make me purer, nobler, more patient. Jesus, the Prince of sufferers,—revealed the new meaning of pain.

Sorrow, natural and necessary, is also sacred. God is love. He proclaims the fact. He creates the darkness and the silence, but He will do His children no harm. In joy or in sorrow, in life or in death, in riches or in poverty, ours is the good and Thine the glory,—oh, our God. He lives. That is to say,—there is a God; He is present with us now; He is our Savior. Then life is all divine.

THE RESURRECTION

*Season of new life returning
All the landscape to adorn,
Welcome to our hearts in mourning
On this Resurrection morn.*

*In the budding branches madly
Song birds stir the trees again,
And the world is smiling gladly
Messenger of hope to men.*

*Through the vernal woodlands shining
Comes the love of God to view,
And in tender hearts repining
Christ the Lord is risen anew.*

PRAYER

ALMIGHTY God, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, fill our minds with truth that will set us free from superstition and ignorance. Help us to grow in spiritual understanding that we may attain to maturity in Christ Jesus. We deplore the errors that weaken our service of Thee, but use us, oh God, where and when Thou wilt, making us more than conquerors through Christ, that loved us. Grant us patience to bear our sorrows, and in the day of weakness may there come to us a new revelation of Thy strength. Bless us in Thy service. May ours be the victory over every enemy within and without. Amen.

XXII

THE GEOGRAPHY OF FAITH

Seek those things which are above.—COLOSSIANS 3: 1.

THE wide land of faith is forever unseen. At no point is there any physical contact with it at all. It is the realm of the Spirit around us and within, of which Jesus thought when He said,—“In spirit and in truth.” Religion involves three things,—first, a simple belief in an unseen existence, in itself essentially eternal; secondly, the rearrangement of one’s thoughts in accordance with that view of life; and thirdly, a life in keeping with this spiritual outlook. The Bible is full of examples. Abraham went in faith to seek a better country. Moses made an experiment in government, because he believed in God. In both instances faith operates in the unseen. They did not ask God to unveil the years that they might see the end of their ventures. They went into the unseen, for they trusted in the Lord. Again faith’s country is upward. The sky is very pure. How clear is the sunlight! How different from the cold, soggy, oily mud beneath. It is this contrast that makes us look upward, when we pray. “Seek those things that are above.” John saw the New Jerusalem descending from God out of heaven. It is faith in Jesus Christ. Out of our grief, bitterness, loss, and sin, we look to Jesus, and in His fellowship walk the higher way above the fear and pain of the vale below. Again faith says—forward. Not to the heavens only must we look. Life must be lived in the world as we know it with all its joy and sorrow. The triumph of faith is not postponed till the resurrection. Faith speaks in terms of duty and sacrifice and of victory here and now.

SECURITY

*Let me not like a leaf be blown
Upon a fickle wind,
Nor lie upon the way a stone
Purposeless and blind;*

*But like a seed in season cast
Into the willing soil
To bear when many days are past,
A harvest for man's toil.*

*Let me abide in Thee, dear Lord,
For then my life is free
To bear, obedient to Thy word,
Fruit for eternity.*

PRAYER

GRACIOUS Father, keep alive in us the spirit of venture,—in our business that we may be more diligent and more earnest in our pursuit of all the good. May no failure rob us of hope and no personal shortcoming hinder us from high endeavor. If the way seems long and difficult, let us fear not but rather see more clearly the end achieved, and if we be privileged to reach our goal, let us not stoop to worship the work of our hands. Lift our eyes ever upward to the hills from whence cometh our aid. We would remember Him who gave Himself for others. In His Spirit let us dare to labor and we shall not have lived in vain. Amen.

XXIII

THE POSSIBILITIES OF FAITH

All things are possible to him that believeth.

—MARK 9: 23.

THIS is one of the hidden treasures of the Bible. The little Greek definite article turns this collection of words into a noun. It reads,—“What a thing to say,—‘if thou canst!’” Jesus was surprised. Generally needy sufferers said,—“If Thou wilt.” But this man questioned Christ’s power. Is it not true that the spirit of our generation is found in this phrase? Our faith is conditioned. It lacks joyousness, supremacy, and power. Jesus called that state of mind unbelief. Our age is chiefly peculiar for what it does not believe. Haltingly and often with unconcern men say to Jesus,—“If Thou canst.” “If Thou wilt” is a prayer; “If Thou canst” is a challenge. Listen to Jesus,—“all things are possible to them that believe.”

The poor man was speaking through his tears, and sometimes the connecting words are apt to be washed away in the flood. The stricken heart is not always logical. He could recite his sorrow, and how accurately! Sorrow is a good memorizer. There is some excuse, then, for his broken heart. “If Thou canst do anything, have compassion on my boy.” Agony and despair, failure and suffering, loneliness and tragedy cry, “If Thou canst!” And the Master still replies, “What a question to ask. All things are possible to them that believe.” The fault is often not that we have not tried enough, but that we have not believed enough. Does anyone say,—“I cannot be anything but what I am.” Well, Christ will make the past as if it had not been and the future as you never hoped it to be. But such faith is lacking, because our age is morally unfit for it. The machinery is in splendid condition, brains are in motion, ideas are flooding the market, but the heart must be touched. Christian faith is not a forlorn hope; it is a triumphant certainty.

IN PEACE

*Lord, hear my prayer,
Unworthy though I be
To venture where
The pure of heart may see
The quiet grandeur of Thy holy place,
Where grace and truth hold converse face to face.*

*Lord, let this night
Of lonely brooding pass.
Hasten the Light
In whose effulgent glass
I may behold the promise of the day
Across whose sky no clouds shall ever stray.*

*Close Thou my eyes
To the soft strains of peace
From shaded skies.
Let sense his clamor cease.
I shall forget my sorrows here and there,
And all my slumber be a silent prayer.*

PRAYER

OUR Father, Thou art not confined to temples made with hands. Thy Spirit is everywhere, seeking whom He may bless. Be Thou near, we implore Thee, to all who are bearing the burden of loneliness. If they are mourning the loss of dear ones in death, help them to know that their separation is but for a little while, for a thousand years are as a day with the Lord. If their loved ones are far away by land and sea, may they gather round Thy footstool together, for there they are one. No land, no sea can ever divide those who are in Christ Jesus. If loving hearts have become strange by human passion, do Thou in Thy love make reconciliation possible. But above all things may they learn that it is never lonely where God is. Amen.

XXIV

THE GREAT INVITATION

Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest.

—MATTHEW 11: 28.

THE Bible is an open book for all who go to it with human need pleading for satisfaction. Here the soul may find Jesus, whose faith is sunshine and whose service is freedom.

A. *The Appeal of the Gospel.* It is one of the most beautiful words in common use, whose symbol is an open door with a happy welcome inside. How simple it is! The humblest child can understand and, like little children, we should say, “Jesus I come.” How human it is! Jesus knew the struggles of the heart. He came not as a mighty conqueror nor a profound philosopher. Rather, He is the embodiment of humanity’s sufferings in all ages, and therefore is the heart of man drawn to Him by the magnetism of Calvary. The Cross is eternal because of what it is and does. How universal is the appeal! Thought is the most universal attribute of life and sorrow a good second, but in the company of Jesus we learn that it may become an angel in disguise. It is Jesus who speaks, and in Him is found the utmost satisfaction of all earth’s desires.

B. *The Promise of the Gospel.* Jesus does not offer any material benefit. His is a spiritual reward, just what Wordsworth called “The central feeling of all happiness.” It is rest from worry, for sometimes all that the heart can do is trust; rest from sin with its guilt, shame, and power; rest from labor, for He prepares us for our task and welcomes us home when it is done.

This is the calm in the heart of the storm, the melody amid the discord, and the whisper in the darkness. What bread is to the hungry and home to the weary, so is Jesus to the burdened heart. His “Come” is the gateway to the treasure-house of God.

HIS WELCOME

*Speak Thou again, Oh Christ, that I may hear
“Come unto me,”
And my weak heart will answer, with a tear,—
“I come to Thee.”
Oh when the luring voice within me deep
Thy pleading scorns,
Help me to see, dear Lord,—and seeing weep,—
Thy Crown of Thorns.*

*Speak Thou again that all the world may hear
“Come unto me,”
And nations groping through the night of fear
New light will see.
Breathe Thou, dear Lord, this welcome sound
On every wind,
For in Thy service is true freedom found
For all mankind.*

PRAYER

OH, loving Saviour, awaken in my heart the longing for Thy deeper fellowship. Too often have I walked without Thee, and have not learned the secret of Thy holy calm. Strange voices have called me from Thy side, and I have yielded to my sorrow. Oh, never let me be where Thy voice cannot reach me! In this very hour help me to rise up and follow Thee with a new ardor of devotion. Oh, take the shadows from my eyes that I may never doubt Thy leadership, and in the strength of Thy purpose let me continue in Thy way. To Thee, oh Lord, I come weak and erring; with Thee would I go as Thou seest best; and in Thee shall I find the uttermost depths of love. Let me hold Thy hand, my Savior, and as I labor for Thee, Thou shalt lead me into peace that passeth all understanding. Amen.

XXV

THE ETERNAL QUESTION

What must I do to be saved?—MATTHEW 19: 16;
JOHN 6: 28; ACTS 16: 30.

IN these three verses the common consciousness gives expression to its need of God. They represent the highest point of attainment, the ideal life of which every man has a glimpse sooner or later. In each there is a confession of personal shortcoming, a cry for emancipation, an appeal for self-realization. These three questions came from people on quite different intellectual planes, and were prompted by different emotions. The rich young ruler would scarcely consent to be bracketed with the Roman jailer in social status, or in any other way. Yet from the heart of each came the same cry. No man is exempt from this experience, and salvation means, first of all, to be delivered from the shame, the power, the guilt, and the iniquity of sin. It is not as if a bad conscience were reserved for a special type of man. No one need commit a heinous crime to possess it. Lost opportunity, duties shirked, unfaithfulness, refusal to obey the light as it comes, selfishness,—these are things that make human hearts bow in sorrow and shame. It was the respectable churchgoer of the time who asked of Jesus, “What must I do to work the works of God?”

But salvation also involves the planting within the heart of new principles and powers, which will produce a harvest of good for God and man. No man is ever exactly the same after meeting Christ, any more than a country is the same after a revolution. The Christian life is a rebuke, a challenge, an amendment to the standards of the world.

The rich young ruler who seemed to patronize Christ went away surprised and disappointed. The ideal life is more than an inheritance. The curious crowd walked no more with Him. The Philippian jailer was baptized. He asked for “Salvation.”

MY SAVIOR

*Dawn of a summer day,
Birth of the bloom in May,
Starting of love's sweet way,
 My Savior!
And oh, what deep delight
Fills my heart noon and night,
Walking in heaven's light
 With Jesus!*

*Back in the locust years,
Down in the vale of tears,
Deep in the night of fears,
 My Savior,
Gladly I met Him there,
Coming my load to bear,
Stranger so wondrous fair,
 My Jesus.*

*Oh, could I show you how
Cares from the furrowed brow
Charms away then and now
 My Savior.
For Thee I'll watch and pray
Until the break of day;
When shadows flee away,
 My Jesus.*

PRAYER

DEAR Lord and Father, Thy children trust Thee, and in their need bow to receive Thy blessing. Day is night without Thee and plenty is famine when Thou art not nigh. Hope of our hearts, show us the everlasting witness of Thy love, even the Cross of Calvary, and may its brightness reflecting the glory of God guide us unerring through the valleys of fear. In silence speak, Lord, and Thy servants shall hear. Amen.

XXVI

PROGRESSIVE SALVATION

Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.
—ROMANS 13: 11.

WE all have some personal ambition which we long to see accomplished. The hardest thing is to wait till the time is ripe for it. The most shameful thing is to seek the reward without the sacrifices.

A. *The beginning of salvation.* A comparison is suggested. “Than when ye believed,”—there is the starting point. Christ comes into existence for the individual at that moment of committal and surrender. In every life there is a dead past with which we delight to keep company. Without it the Christian life is an enigma. One might as well try to explain the sunlight without the sun. What is this experience? It is like the birth of a child bringing joy to a mother’s heart; like the birth of an ideal in a young man’s life, inspiring and compelling. So is Christ born in us. Some speak of this as a moral union, but the people who need it most are least able to make use of it. There must be a closer fellowship with this living Christ. This is the mystical union of the New Testament,—not irrational for the Gospel explains itself, but mystical because no other experience in life approaches it in intensity, depth, and practical worth. It is the supreme venture of faith, whereby trusting no longer in self, we commit our souls to Christ for time and eternity.

B. *The end of salvation.* Evolution is the working out of some principle unseen at the beginning. The Christian life is all contained in that first experience of conversion,—deliverance from sin, likeness to Christ and devotion to His kingdom. Salvation is viewed here not in its absolute relationship but as modified by human conditions. It is a pressing forward to wider knowledge and deeper fellowship.

GOOD WISHES

*The record that the years will write,
Faint heart, be brave!
No stain will mar the pages white,
If wishes save.*

*When round thee, in an evil hour,
Temptations brood,
May kindly heaven grant thee power
To will the good.*

*And should the busy ways of life
Through mazes bend,
God give thee, in the double strife,
An honest friend!*

*When frowns the midnight dark and long
And chills you through,
May hope still sing his old-time song,
And love be true!*

*Or if the sun of fortune smile
With giddy ray,
Rest in the sheltered glade awhile
In peace to pray.*

*If in the garden of thy heart
Some blight should fall,
May flowers from the tear-drop start
At love's sweet call!*

PRAYER

OUR Father in Heaven, with simple faith we turn to Thee again for wisdom and encouragement. Let not strife make us scornful nor success make us careless, but with unquestioning obedience help us to seek the extension of Thy kingdom by our loving service. Amen.

XXVII

THE CHRISTIAN CAREER

Follow me.—MATTHEW 4: 19.

THERE are four steps in the making of a Christian.

A. *At the feet of Jesus.* “Depart from me,” said Peter. This is superstition. Christ says, “Come unto Me.” Dagon inspires terror. God is love. Yet here is found the spirit of reverence and repentance without which the work of Christ cannot be accomplished. Contact with Jesus awakens a sense of guilt which He alone can relieve. Every Christian is first of all a sinner seeking the Savior.

B. *By the side of Jesus.* The Lord received Peter as he was, with all his faults. “Thou art Simon.” God does not want us to imitate others. Artificial flowers are sometimes difficult to detect, but God is not deceived. The new name—Cephas—was not the adding of a few letters to his title. Jesus discovered and revealed merit hitherto unsuspected. We are told that the Master “looked on him”—a look that Peter remembered long afterwards. It was in this moment of mutual understanding that Peter became the friend of Jesus.

C. *At the command of Jesus.* “Follow Me.” This was Peter’s most difficult lesson. Only the years of devotion to Jesus could teach the weak and wilful disciple to forget himself and be lost in His Lord. The scholar must have more than a passing acquaintance with his books. To be a disciple one must learn unquestioning obedience.

D. *In the service of Jesus.* Peter was called away from the familiar fishing nets to assist Jesus. Into other lands he was privileged to bear the good tidings of salvation. God has service for all His children, and apostles we may be without suffering martyrdom or braving the dangers of heathen lands. Your world is to be saved for Jesus and there is something that you only can do. In doing it faithfully and patiently you reach the climax of the Christian career.

THE THREE GRACES

*Faith holds the truth with trembling hands
Yet firm with grim solicitude,—
A bold reply to doubts demands,
And noble trust in all the good.*

*Hope points to where the skyline dips
To meet the long extended plain,
And murmurs oft with eager lips
Of larger life and richer gain.*

*While Love beneath the burden bent,
Walks the long way that lies between.
A palace is his humble tent,
Where fellow pilgrims rest at e'en.*

PRAYER

LORD of the sunlight, grant us the grace of cheerfulness. Forgive our idle moping and moody fretfulness. Save us from being disagreeable amongst our fellows that we may be known more for our smiles than for sighs. Help us in the enjoyment of our daily pleasures that we may be happy without being foolish and satisfied without incontinence. Preserve in us a simple mind that, like little children, we may find our sweetest delights within ourselves. Make us quick to see the lovely graces of the world about us, that we may sing with the birds, skip like the lambs, and blush like the flowers. May we pitch our tent where the valleys laugh and sing, and when the stormy darkness descends, keep us hoping for the roseate dawn of peace. Amen.

XXVIII

THE CHRISTIAN SECRET

Abide in him.—I JOHN 2: 28.

JESUS makes a fourfold call upon the souls of men—“Come unto Me,” “Learn of Me,” “Follow Me,” “Abide in Me.” Our attitude should be trust, acceptance, and surrender. Some men do a great injustice to Christian experience by disparaging its emotional quality. Quiet, sedate, and conventional minds are apt to fall into this error. Intellectualism may be just as reprehensible as emotionalism, for logical consistency is not the whole of reality! We do not know Christ in the New Testament sense as a philosophy. He is more than a balance of probabilities. We know Him by communion with Him. Think of the part emotion plays in everyday life. The nervous process is the condition of intellectuality and so in any work on the science of mind a large amount of space is given to the discussion of feeling and sensation. In poetry, music, and dramatic art the hidden chord is emotion. Think of the power of love! A marriage without love is misery beyond words, and union with Christ without love is an utter impossibility. The reason is simple. This is a union between personalities. It is not so in other religions, but Christianity is adherence to the living Person of Christ. Therefore He said, “Abide in Me.” This union is illustrated by the picture of the vine. It traces the origin, the sustenance, and the growth of the Christian life. The branch grows out and draws its strength from the stem. If this relationship be interfered with, growth ceases. So are we related to Christ by faith and love, but many souls are withered, limp, and dead for lack of union with Him who is the source of all life. The Church is just such a tree. Every leaf, twig, and branch is held together by a common relationship to the stem. So we who are in Christ are bound together by our common experiences, and we have fellowship one with the other.

IN NEED

*In lone humility I pray,
Forgive the folly of this day,
For my poor heart is prone to stray
From Thee, my Lord.*

*No mortal mind can ever know
Why in the slough I sink so low.
With tearful longing then I go
To Thee, my Lord.*

*Thy truth is still the surest way.
Oh let me then Thy will obey,
That I may live from day to day
With Thee, my Lord.*

*The joys of earth pass quickly by
Like clouds across a summer sky.
Let me find peace that cannot die
In Thee, my Lord.*

PRAYER

ALMIGHTY God who hast made us for Thyself, we bow before Thee in faith and love. We thank Thee for the rich endowment which Thou hast given to each one of us. For our bodies that are the servants of our wills. May they be preserved from accident and ailment. Help us to have command over ourselves that our bodies may be instruments of righteousness. We thank Thee for our minds by which we become conscious of Thee. Help us to love the truth sincerely so that no error may ever hide Thee from us, and if for the moment we see through a glass darkly may we have patience to labor and pray for the open vision of eternal reality. In the deeper places of our life, oh Lord, enable us to find fellowship with Thee. Amen.

XXIX

THE FRIENDSHIP OF JESUS

Ye are my friends.—JOHN 15: 14.

BLESSED is the man who can make friends and keep them! What a charm this fine word has upon the lips of Jesus! It is so human. Jesus loved and valued highly the close companionship of good men. Here He claims their sympathy and help. Before Him lay Gethsemane, Calvary, and the tomb. Is it any wonder that He longed for their devotion?

“No longer do I call you slaves.” Jesus had often used that word as in the parables, and it fitly describes the relationship between God and His people under the law. Even the first disciples had to be treated in this fashion, for there was progress in their relationship to Jesus. The slave is not a person, but an instrument (verse 15). He does not enter into his master’s plans. He must have no mind of his own, and he is too far beneath his master’s level ever to be called friend. Friendship is only secured on the basis of equality. “No longer slaves but friends.” The difference between them is that between a guide and a slave-driver. The former you are free to follow. He puts the rope around you and together you climb the slippery paths. The slave-driver puts shackles on your feet and a burden on your back. With his whip he scourges you on, and forward you must go or perish by the way. No wonder Paul said, “The law of the spirit of life hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” The only master now is the Spirit of Christ,—constraining, restraining, and sustaining,—and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Too many, alas, regard the Christian life as a form of slavery with all its drudgery. God does not want to make you prisoners, but friends, near and dear to Him, and Jesus makes you sit at His own table.

SEEKING

*All through the woods I passed
Pierced by the thorns and groping for the way.
Then as the darkness bowed to greet the day,
I reached my goal at last.*

*Welcome spake aloud
From every window and from every tree,
And there were tears in my Lord's eyes to see
My dripping head low-bowed.*

*Oh, to forget the way
In the warm splendor of His secret place!
And in the quiet radiance of His face
I live but for today.*

PRAYER

FATHER, hear us while we pray for all noble and worthy souls neglected and forgotten. If love has slighted them, help them to see the deeper meaning of human passion, and if they should suffer through lack of appreciation for service rendered to others, help them, like Jesus, to feel increasing joy only in the doing of it. Give then grace to remain worthy of the best. May they not soil their minds with envy nor redden their eyes with regret. In the anguish of loneliness, gracious Father, be Thou near to them like the moonlight flooding the woods at midnight. May they find their reward in the consciousness of Thy blessing. Let them lean upon Thy promise, for in the quiet of eventide, as they sit in their door, the angel of Thy Presence will visit them, bringing the blessed fruits of their toil. Amen.

XXX

THE JOY OF JESUS

The joy of thy salvation.—PSALM 51: 12.

JOY is the coefficient of faith. Sin is separation. Faith is reconciliation. God and man are joined in love, and love is joy.

Joy is not merely interest, nor is it pleasure which may mean the satisfaction of one particular desire. It is not happiness which suggests something that happens to us and comes from without. Joy is purely spiritual in its origin and development, and is found in the New Testament word, "Blessed," which was very common on the lips of Jesus. Consider His example. Painters show our Lord nearly always sad. Philosophers have described Christianity as a religion of sorrow. Goethe said so and Carlyle agreed with him. So we picture Him as a Man of Sorrows. The halo round His head does not make amends. Nobody ever saw it there on the roads of Galilee. Jesus did not need it. He was happier than some imagine Him to have been. Take His own words. He compared Himself to a bridegroom,—surely the personification of happiness. "Except ye become as little children," He said, and pointed to the sunny smile chasing away so quickly the sighs and tears. "Rejoice and be exceeding glad." Such words refer to the outward expression of joy as if He said, "dance for joy."

Why, then, are there so many Christians perpetually whining and whimpering, discontented and despondent? It may be that, like Peter, they are following Christ afar off. To walk with Jesus is to walk in the light. Without Him it is night. The joyless Christian may be immature and undeveloped. By entering into new spiritual conquests the heart is gladdened and encouraged.

THE WINE OF LIFE

*A sparkling crystal glass
That once I gave to you,
A secret kiss to pass
As loyal lovers do.*

*A pearly snow white bowl
Full of the wine of life,
For love would make him whole
That fell amid the strife.*

*A maimed and well worn cup
Of tears that fell like hail,
And we two kneeled to sup.
It was the Holy Grail.*

PRAYER

ALMIGHTY God, our mortal days are few and in our blindness we miss their meaning. Teach us that this is not all. Here we have no continuing city. Beyond the shadows there is a better country where faith becomes sight, and where love's blossoms know no decay. We would seek this rest, oh God, by living and dying with Christ. He is the way which, if we follow it, will guide us at last to the home eternal. Let not the hours be wasted in idle speculation. In the glorious certainty of the heavenly vision, let us be pure in heart, looking unto Jesus. Amen.

XXXI

THE REASONABLENESS OF JESUS

They marvelled at his reasoning.—MATTHEW 7: 28.

A GREAT many today speak of Christianity as if it were unreasonable. It is supposed to be essentially opposed to reason. Was Jesus like that? We are told that they marveled at His reasoning. He made men think for themselves. "Which is the greatest commandment?" He asked,—"How readest thou?", "Whom do ye say that I am?", "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all . . . thy mind." "This is life eternal that they might know thee." Jesus emphasized the facts of faith, but it takes more than unaided intellect to apprehend them. All the forces at man's command must be employed if Christ is to be known. There is nothing unreasonable in this.

Christianity, it is said, is being lost amid sensuous symbolism. Did Jesus intend that? Think how He spoke of prayer. They stood in the markets and in the synagogues to display their superior spirituality. The Lord bade His followers pray in secret. Honesty is the best policy in religion as everywhere else. Jesus is not to blame for the ornate funeral that men call ritual. His interest is in men and women.

Is not Christianity a mere sentiment? Well, Jesus did not coddle men. He spoke of casting pearls before swine and giving holy things to dogs. Our Lord made enemies by His firmness. There is nothing effeminate in Christianity. Without its virility it is decadent.

Is its doctrinal basis not unreasonable? Ask Jesus. He will say only two words to you, "Follow Me." Be slow to form opinions. Remember there are non-essentials. No man has the monopoly of truth. Cultivate the higher qualities of the soul, and you will learn sympathy with others. Even the Christian life is not unreasonable, though it be a living sacrifice. Jesus lived it and that is enough.

DESTINY

*If God, the Father, gave me mind
Above the drowsy cattle,
For truth that mortal ne'er designed
He meant me to do battle.*

*If God Almighty gave me strength
Of body robed in beauty,
He girded me to scale at length
The highest heights of duty.*

*If God the Spirit gave to me
A soul to clothe my passion,
He made me blind that I might see
The new earth's fairer fashion.*

*Then let thy faith its virtue show.
The years will tell the story.
Thy life and not thy creed will grow
To be thy crown in glory.*

PRAYER

GRACIOUS Father, forgive our narrowness. Enable us to comprehend the measure of Thy love, that we may share its fulness. May there be no sneer upon our lips, and let the bitter spirit within us vanish before Thy love like the shadows at morn. Set us free from the shackles of prejudice and bigotry, that our faith may be quick to see the good in others. Deliver us from intolerance, from useless argument, and from shameful strife. Let us be ever willing to join in the service of the good cause with all who love Thee in sincerity and in truth. Give us a great patience with all who stumble and fall, and may we ever be found on the side of those who strive to know and to do the right. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

XXXII

THE BODY OF CHRIST

Now ye are the body of Christ.—I CORINTHIANS 12: 27.

THE place which the Church occupies in the hearts of the people is beyond human calculation. The reason is simple,—it does not represent loyalty to an idea or to stone and lime but to a person, even Jesus, and to an experience of saving grace through fellowship with Him.

The Church is spoken of as the “body of Christ.” This illustrates very clearly the close relationship between our Lord and His followers. The phrase is not used in any physical sense but with a mystical and spiritual significance. Behind the material form there is life. The real presence is hid from us,—the heart that beats for us, the voice that speaks, and the mind that plans. Christ is actually living in His Church, and if this Christ-life be not ours, then are we not part of the Church. The Church is a body whose soul is Jesus.

It is difficult to reconcile this sacred conception with the scenes of division and corruption around us. Do not be too impressed with these things. God is willing to use imperfect instruments; moreover, there can be an infinite number of circles around one center, and Jesus is the center reconciling all our differences,—unity amid variety, and harmony amid discord. He is the Head of the body (Colossians 1: 18), supplying thought, energy, and expression, the never-failing source of life and light.

Consider the bearing of this on the unity of the Church. “We being many are one body and every one members of one another.” Every part of the human body has its own duty to perform and there cannot be exchange of function. Only when they work together is there health and happiness. Even an obscure nerve cell that fails to coöperate can work havoc, for this is how disease begins. Therefore, since we are members of Christ’s body, it is our first duty to coöperate with Him in bringing the world to God.

CHURCH OF CHRIST

*Oh Church of Christ! On thy fair brow
The symbol of the higher Mind
That gave thee birth, is written. Thou
For sacred ends designed!*

*Oh guard thy strength from folly's thrall!
Ne'er be thy throbbing heart deceived
Till Christ in thee, whate'er befall,
His purpose hath achieved.*

*Let all thy virgin strength be given,
Till mind and will respond with joy,
In man to mould the soul of heaven,
The hosts of hell destroy.*

PRAYER

ALMIGHTY God, may we be ever conscious that to worship is to be with Thee. In Thy love is life, O Lord, and we beseech Thee to speak tenderly to every waiting heart. Let no sorrow be unrelieved and no holy aspiration unfulfilled. We cry to Thee for blessing upon the Church of Jesus everywhere. Let her not be put to shame at all, but conscious of her divine mission may she triumph most gloriously in the salvation of the world. In this day of special need, give her leaders wisdom and to all the people a willingness to serve. Let Thy Spirit prepare each for his task and may we fear not, but trust in Him whose kingdom ruleth over all. Let Thy Church be a praise upon the earth, and to this end we dedicate our all. Amen.

HOLY SPIRIT

XXXIII

THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT

He breathed on them and saith unto them, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit."—JOHN 20: 21-23.

L IKE the soft zephyrs of the dawn whispering in the pine trees or like the storm at sea sweeping the terrified vessels hither and yon, so is the breath of God. Under its influence have passed the men who have been blessed to the world in the uplift of their fellows. Their task has been definite, their call imperative, and their answer decisive.

This verse says that Christ will be in His disciples and in His Church in as real a way and with as much power as God was in Christ Himself. Here is the foundation truth of the Gospel. Here is love incredible. Into our darkness, confusion, and defeat comes the eternal Lord of light bringing assurance, peace, and victory. Was it not so in the early Church? With the Spirit came the power to heal the sick, boldness to meet the accusers of Jesus, and love to overcome their own personal grievances and differences. Their enemies took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.

Here is the covenant between God and man sealed anew. Back in the uncertain dawn of time God breathed into man the breath of life. In this symbolic action of Jesus, God breathed into man a still higher life. First there was the mineral, then the vegetable, then the animal, then the human, then the spiritual and then the Christian, which is the highest endowment of all. The saint is the only true superman,—not in intellect nor in body first, but in soul, for in Him Christ lives again before the eyes of men.

We are too easily satisfied with ourselves. Our standards are borrowed from the world; not from Christ. We measure ourselves by what others say and not by what Christ says. We test our responsibilities in the law courts and not at the cross of Calvary.

MY FRIEND

*When the toil of the day is over
And I sit alone at e'en,
While the mists above me hover,
That float from the strange unseen,*

*I can talk with a friend beside me,
Who knows what my life has been,
And gather the wisdom to guide me
In the whisper that passes between.*

*As I walk in the valley of flowers,
When the shadows are kissing my feet,
And the dew with its gauzy showers
Is coming the glade to greet,*

*I can hear a voice from the midnight,
That answers the call of desire,
And I find in the glow of the twilight,
Love's gentle yet chastening fire.*

*It is God Who is near me walking,
The Friend that is aye by my side,
And the even hath found us talking
Of things that forever abide.*

*Oh I pray that He ever may find me
As I wait for the silent time
When I leave the world behind me
And walk through the city sublime.*

PRAYER

FAATHER, I thank Thee for life's pleasant associations, for the companionship of those who love me and for the silent ministrations of beauty and harmony in nature. How wonderful are Thy works! Amen.

XXXIV

THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT

Ye shall receive power.—ACTS 1: 8.

TWO words are used in the Greek for power, one signifying rule or authority and the other, ability, strength or force. In the latter sense it is used here. This is not political power. That came later into the life of the Church and led to degeneracy. It is not intellectual power only. The Church's business is not to create intellectual geniuses, but to make men humble and more Godlike. Nor is this miraculous power. The greatest of all miracles is a transformed life under the influence of Christ. This power is spiritual. It is from God; it is personal in its attachments and it is moral in its results, for it leads to a certain kind of life after the image of Jesus.

Think of the secret of this power. The apostles were well equipped, for they had seen and heard the risen Lord, but they lacked something until that eventful day when the Holy Spirit came upon them. What if we be rich, learned and powerful in the eyes of the world! Without the aid of the Holy Spirit we may yet be of little value to the Kingdom.

Why should we believe in the Holy Spirit? Because Christ promised the Spirit, because Jesus Himself received the Spirit, and because the experience of the apostles reveals the results of His presence. The Christian life is incomplete that has no room for the Holy Spirit. This does not mean madness, or ecstasy, or emotional disturbance. It is love, joy, and peace. The disciples received Him because they tarried at Jerusalem. Today we are too sudden. We must learn to wait upon God. They prayed also,—intense, concentrated appeal in their hour of need. Impatience in God's company is a sign of spiritual default. Think of the service this Spirit rendered. The apostles became missionaries, martyrs, witnesses for Him and gave the Gospel to the world.

DAWN

*The twilight lingers like a blessing said
By hoary age upon a raven head,
But soon, too soon, the last faint gleam is fled,
And I must go my way.*

*If there be nothing for my soul to find
But stray leaves herded by a witless wind,
No better am I than a beggar blind
That knoweth not his way.*

*Only if love speak tenderly to me
Will hope sing softly till the shadows flee,
And I shall walk where faith alone may see
The winding upward way.*

*Again the dawn will greet me with delight,
And when the purple radiance thrills my sight,
I shall forget the labors of the night
Upon love's sunnier way.*

PRAYER

A LMIGHTY God, we thank Thee for Thy wonders in nature, for Thy coming into the world in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, and for Thy secret presence in the hearts of all who truly trust in Thee. Thy voice is not silent nor is Thy hand idle. Deep in the silent places of our life Thy Spirit labors continually to fashion us after the image of Jesus. Give us faith to honor Thy Spirit that we may yield our lives to His desire and learn to do the works of our Lord and Savior. Subdue our wills that in the quietness of meditation we may see the progress of Thy Kingdom. Show us our place in Thy mighty plan. Let us not be afraid, but opening our hearts to Thy Spirit, let us take our place with the multitudes who through the ages have laid down their lives for Jesus' sake. Amen.

XXXV

THE COMMUNION OF THE SPIRIT

The communion of the Holy Spirit.

—II CORINTHIANS 13: 14.

COMMUNION is a religious term, and it is to be distinguished from words like union, unity, and community. These are claimed by business, science, and politics. Communion expresses the ultimate in human experience. Certain things we must have in common with God if we are to have communion with Him.

A. There must be a spiritual life within us. Jesus taught that the common origin of our race is found in God. His life is in us. While we speak of the eternity of God, we also speak of the immortality of man. Communion is impossible on a purely naturalistic basis. We do not commune with nature, but with the beautiful God of whom it is the expressive symbol. Materialistic habits may put us out of sympathy with such a view of life. Then is the Spirit dead within us. Only the religious attitude practised by Jesus can lead to its recovery.

B. This communion is possible only on a basis of holiness. The life of the Spirit is not something aloof from the events of every day. Through the never-ending struggle the Spirit within us gains the ascendancy, until the will of God reigns supreme. Not any kind of man may find fellowship with God,—only the righteous, who has found his strength in Jesus. Oh, how unworthy are we of this holy communion, but we remember our Lord. He is our righteousness, and through Him we are able to look with perfect trust into the face of our heavenly Father.

C. The New Testament words suggest mutual exchange. Our closest friendships are cemented by delicate thoughtfulness and sympathy. Love asks love in return. Now, God has given us life in Christ, life like Christ, and life for Christ. What shall we give to Him? All that we have and are! It is fair exchange.

COMFORT

*Oh Son of Man Who walked the weary way
 Into the wilderness,
Where burning sands lie low in wait to slay,
 And mock the soul's distress!*

*Oh Thou Who companied with friendless sorrow,
 And went forth doing good—
Only to feel the sting upon the morrow
 Of coarse ingratitude!*

*Oh Cross of pain! Oh darkness bleak and lone!
 Oh sullen death's despair!
Oh Thou Who saw the heavenly harvests grown,
 When mortal fields were bare!*

*Ah, Thou didst know the secret of the calm
 That soothes the troubled soul.
Thy wounded Spirit breathes the fragrant balm,
 That makes the sad heart whole.*

PRAYER

WITH humble hearts we seek Thee, oh Spirit Eternal. Thou art the fountain of living water. From Thee cometh the light to illumine the darkness of our ignorance and folly, and in Thee there is power to inspire the fainting soul. Alas that we have tried to live without Thee. Spirit of Love and Peace, take possession of our minds and control our wills that the years may be ennobled by obedience and service. It is enough if Thou art with us. Gracious Spirit, may the eyes of all nations be opened to see Thy glory, and in this day of human strength and weakness reveal Thy heart of love that burdened souls may find a refuge there. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

XXXVI

THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

Your life is hid with Christ in God.—COLOSSIANS 3: 1-4.

OUR most precious possession is life. God has improved it many times since it came from His hands through mineral, vegetable, and animal, and the spirituality of the Christian life is the highest form known to history. This is the abundant life. Earlier forms were the children of their environment, and history has been writing the story of man's deliverance.

Sometimes the word used here is misrepresented. Hidden should not mean concealed or stored away with deliberate intent to deprive others of certain advantages. Was Christ's life hidden? He Himself said that he spoke and labored openly. Yet some have treated the Christian life after the fashion of the miser, the coward, the archæologist or the mollycoddle. It is not enough that we should analyze our Christian experience, but that we should declare it. The Church has suffered from such obscurantism. Many of her children have been in disguise, hiding the garments of their faith for one reason or another in the closets of discreet respectability. The result is that superstition, bigotry, and hypocrisy have taken hold of the deceivers.

But there is a sense in which this text is true. The Old Testament speaks of the secret place of the Most High. The spring is secreted among the rocks from which the pure waters bubble forth. The roots are secret that the tree may climb into the sky. Life is hidden in the blood that the eye may flash and the lips move. Such is the life of the Spirit. He is Teacher, Comforter and Benefactor according to Jesus, and our ability to meditate and contemplate is sufficient justification for the exercise of our spiritual faculties. The roots of our spiritual life go far down into the unseen. The source of our strength is in God.

A SECRET

*Life dare not tell it all.
Her secret deep
Is as the dreams that call
When pinewoods sleep,—
A mystery that waves us on
From twilight through the sylvan dawn.*

*Time cannot tell it all.
Upon the wind
The seeds of promise fall,
And I am blind,
For what the harvest that will grow
Eternity alone will show.*

*I may not tell it all,
For love enjoys
The heart's enchanted hall
Beyond life's noise.
Oh, Love hath nothing more to say
If roses be not fair today.*

PRAYER

O H, God unseen, from whom all goodness flows, make us very sure of Thy presence. Forbid that we should forget Thee in the throng and press, and graciously direct our eyes to Thy wonderful works in the heavens above and the earth beneath. Strengthen, oh Lord, the roots of our life. May we be more eager to draw our nourishment from Thy secret springs than that we should display our vanity among the stars. Teach us the wisdom of Thy secret place and let us count it all joy when we leave the confusion of earth's voices to seek communion with Thee. Like the blossoms of the spring so may our faith reveal Thy tender care unseen yet ever real. Amen.

XXXVII

THE DAY OF THE SPIRIT

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.—REVELATION 1: 10.

THE Sabbath brings to our remembrance the finished work of Jesus and His resurrection. It speaks of triumph over sin and death and of promise of that eternal Sabbath beyond the shores of time. It is the day of worship when our thoughts are lifted above ourselves.

The spirit-filled life is essential to true worship. "Flesh" in the New Testament describes man's relation to the visible world. "Spirit" defines the range of the activities of the Spirit of God in man's life. God does not take our life by instalments. The Spirit of God must be an abiding presence leading us into all the truth.

It is possible to be in the Church and in the fashion without being "in the Spirit." The spirit of indifference will make worship a meaningless cipher in your experience. Criticism is directed against God. Sloth will open the way for the armed man of spiritual poverty. But what of him who says "I am not in the mood today." He ought to say "I am not in the Spirit." What a criticism upon ourselves! Moods are but the fleeting foibles of vagrant minds; the Spirit is the abiding presence of God, lending stability, strength and purpose to life.

In the Spirit we are united. It is all very well to say that we can worship God in the fields or in the secret place. That is in the highest degree possible, but the Spirit of God within us will compel us to seek the fellowship of Christian believers. He is a Spirit of love and love cannot live in isolation. Cathedrals in days of old were built near the market-places. So is God near at all times. Serve Him every other day and you will be in the Spirit on the Lord's day.

THE HIGHER WILL

*A little company beside the sea,
Where sunny ripples on the pebbles played
With little folk, my straying footstep stayed,
For straining eyes were gazing eagerly
On Him who blessed the children at His knee,
And wondering His words of wisdom weighed.
Then as my hesitating heart obeyed,
He lifted up His eyes and spake to me.*

*As in the solemn eve, when all is still,
Diviner voices chasten mortal doubt,
So in the hush that folded me about
I heard the summons of the Higher Will.*

*He gave the winds His voice, "Come, learn of me."
'Twas echoed softly by the whispering sea.*

PRAYER

OH, Thou who hast called us into service, we thank Thee for the quiet hours of the sacred day when we can lay aside our toil and be at rest. Grant that we may give those hallowed hours not to sloth and debauch but to the refreshment of our souls and to Thy ministry of love. Purify our worship that with clean hands and pure heart we may ascend unto the hill of the Lord. May we feel our fellowship with the saints of God in all generations within Thy house and go back to our service again inspired by their sacrifices. Let Thy Spirit take possession of our hearts that we may be strengthened and taught to do Thy will and extend Thy Kingdom. Let us not fail Thee, Father, but find our hearts' desire in following Him who died that we might live. Amen.

XXXVIII

THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE

The Spirit and the Bride say come.—REVELATION 22: 17.

THIS is the keyword of the Bible,—a pleasant word, for it signifies the offer of friendship.

A. *The call to come.* With threefold emphasis it sounds in our ears. The Spirit says “Come.” This is the Spirit of Christ,—His representative in the world. He is with us still and none other has such right to speak. The Spirit is ever urging us to think, live, and serve like Jesus.

The Bride says “Come.” This is the symbol of the Church. Since the time of our Lord she has existed and she has served the Spirit only as she has remembered His message. Her error has been that too often she has substituted creeds, kingdoms, and crusades for Christ. Her one appeal is,—the world for Jesus. She is not authorized to speak any other message or to seek any other mission. The Christian says “Come.” This is an appeal to individual loyalty. The world says “Come to this, that or the other thing.” The Christian says “Come to Christ.” The next words explain the urgency. “Let him that is athirst come.” Thirst is the most painful of starved appetites. The soul is athirst for God. He alone can meet the needs of the soul.

B. *What of the will to come?* God treats us as free agents. Without our coöperation He can do little. Some are willing but not thirsty. They have no sense of need. They have the mind but not the heart. It is the work of the Spirit to awaken the heart to its need of God. Some are thirsty but not willing. “Whosoever” is a broad word, but “whosoever will” is much narrower. Are you willing to be on Christ’s side and to be reckoned among His people? It is His Spirit that calls you.

THE WOOING WORD

*Spirit of love, I would return
From out the strife of time forlorn.
Oh, speed me with Thy wooing word,
And tell me of Thy welcome Lord.*

*Oh stretch Thy wounded hands to me,
That in Thy sorrow I may see
The love that bears another's pain,
And teaches grief to hope again.*

*What if I stumble? Plead for me,
Oh Savior, in my agony.
With unseen arms around me thrown
Tell me that I am not alone.*

*And bring me to my end, dear Lord,
By swollen stream or shining sword,
That for the joy awaiting there
I may the last dread Valley dare.*

PRAYER

O H, Thou who hast filled the world with sweetness, help us to hear Thy loving voice in every singing bird and lilting breeze. Far and wide Thou art calling us to Thy side and in the soft voice of Thy Spirit where the voices of the world are still. How often have we turned aside from Thy pleading, so unmindful of Thy mercy! Turn our steps to Thee, Oh Spirit unseen, and let us stay not, until we come to Thy secret places. Thou art the garden where the heavenly graces grow, and from Thy cooling fountains flow the springs of pure delight. We are not worthy to taste the precious fruits that Thou hast provided, but oh, Thou who knowest all hearts, satisfy us with Thy love and make us strong. Out of our poverty and hunger we come to Thee, for in Thee alone is peace. Amen.

XXXIX

THE EYES OF THE SPIRIT

Whom having not seen ye love.—I PETER 1: 8.

WHAT strikes one about this text is its boldness and exalted confidence. It betrays a weakness, however. How can we love Him whom we have not seen? To all appearances Christianity becomes a chimera, a vain fancy, a rock in the air. The critic shakes his head and shuts the book. The difficulty is that we have not seen Him. An eternal manifestation in the flesh alone would satisfy.

The question arises, however, supposing we did see Him, would we recognize Him? Remember the feebleness of human vision, its deceitfulness, and its fickleness. Again supposing we did recognize Him, would we believe in Him? The fact is that if Christ were to appear in our streets tomorrow, multitudes would jostle and push one another in order to confute the Son of God. Amid our craze for sightseeing His coming, if it were like the last, would be a nine days' wonder, satisfying a passing whim and relieving the monotony of our existence only until we got rid of Him.

The question arises, How can we know Him if we have not seen Him? How can we believe in Him if we do not know? And how can we love Him if we do not believe in Him? The Bible has given a name to the spiritual receptiveness by which we become conscious of Jesus. It is faith. By faith we see beyond the boundaries of sense and view the landscape of eternity. Only the Christian can see in the real sense, for he sees with eyes that fail not, the things that fail not, and with a light that fails not.

Faith is the atmosphere. Love is life. In Christian experience, not knowledge alone, but love, is power. That love will wait in expectation of seeing Him. Love is the center of gravity and will make captive every thought, impulse and desire.

BLINDED WINDOWS

*Oh my sorrow, lonely is the way
That I have walked with thee. How dark the room
And cold, no echo through the sullen gloom
Where I must dwell with thee! If I should pray
My hoarse voice in the silence seems to stay
Upon the haunted stairways. 'Tis a tomb
That grief hath builded for love's fragrant bloom,
And life hath whispered that I must obey.*

*Yet shall I longer wait to greet the day
That soon must break where God alone may see,
And through the blinded windows eagerly
Hope shall look in on me with eyes of grey.*

*I may not hasten by an hour the morn,
And yet the light will find me here forlorn.*

PRAYER

OUT of the darkness of our doubt we seek Thee, oh Lord of earth and sky. How often we rest in the things that are temporal and perishing, forgetting that these are but the symbols of a love that never dies. May we never be satisfied with the things of earth and sense. In that purer world that borders time, help us to find the satisfaction of our deepest needs and the fulfilment of our purest dreams. Lift up before our minds the image of our loving Lord that we may daily strive to be like Him. May He be more real to us than the gains of earth and more compelling than the desires of sense. Let not the veil of time hide from us His eternal presence, but may we see Him still walking through the streets of sorrow and hear Him calling us into the service of love. Help us to see with the eyes of Jesus. Amen.

XL

SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT

I have meat to eat that ye know not of.—JOHN 4: 32.

WHAT meat was this? The body must be fed, but it will die, whatever we eat. The mind demands food and a society for the suppression of useless knowledge would not be altogether out of place. The spirit must be nourished. We mistake its needs. Theology is not religion. Communion with God is inward and spiritual. Books and worship will help, but only the Eternal Spirit can spread the table of the soul with rich bounties to make glad the heart. Our spiritual food is the Bread of Life,—the bread which does not contain within itself the elements of decay. We too have meat to eat “that others know not of.”

Think of the things which filled Christ’s heart then. In verse 34 He says,—“My meat is to do the will of him that sent me.” This is the supreme spiritual standard (Colossians 4: 12). It is the supreme ethical standard (Mark 3: 35). It is the supreme divine standard, for it is the equivalent of the Kingdom of God on earth. And it is the supreme human standard (Luke 22: 42). How blessed, indeed, is that life in which every movement of mind and heart is subject to the will of the Heavenly Father.

Again, success gave Jesus joy, for had He not come to finish the work of Him from Whom He came? Another soul had been led to the truth. Another life had been enlisted in the service of the Kingdom, and in the prospect of a redeemed world which this incident presented to Him, the mind of Jesus rejoiced. Oh, let Christ’s followers today forget their grievances in their zeal for the Kingdom of God, and satisfy the heart’s deeper hunger with loving service.

But the disciples knew not of what Jesus spake.

SATISFIED

*No more of mystery to rob
My aching heart of holy calm,
For life hath answered with a sob,
When I had looked for prayer and psalm!*

*No more uncertainty to blind
My prospects of the upward way!
Oh, why should night my footsteps find,
Where I am most inclined to stray!*

*No more to weep upon the shore,
While love sails silently away,
For heaven will open wide the door
Between the even and the day!*

*Oh, let me sail the mystic sea
That makes eternity of time,
For there alone my soul is free
To find a home in any clime.*

PRAYER

OUR Father, when we pray to Thee, such thoughts of beauty and goodness arise in our minds that we are ashamed and distressed. The vision of Jesus awakens us to a new sense of duty, and we feel unworthy to serve with Him. Gracious Lord, help us still to cherish the high ideals of the better life, that come like good angels from Thy presence into our souls, and give us hearts willing to be taught of Thee. Whatever it may cost us, we would strive more earnestly to attain, and we plead with Thee to be with us on the upward way. May no soul be disheartened unto death by the stumbling, but rather learn to lean on Thee yet again. Help us to keep our eyes forward, looking unto Jesus, our Friend and Savior. So shall we ever come nearer unto Thee. Amen.

XLI

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace.

—GALATIANS 5: 22-23.

GOD planted a garden, we are told, in the midst of His new world. It was a failure. A new garden He is building in the hearts of men, spiritual and eternal and beyond the reach of human failure.

The gardener is the Holy Spirit. His work, unseen and unheard, is essential to the welfare of the race. Education, culture and reform are well in their place, but they do not go deep enough. They may prune the tree and improve the environment, but they cannot force it to grow and produce the good fruit. The spiritual must overcome the natural. These two are in conflict until we surrender thoughts, habits and desires to God.

The purpose of the gardener is to produce such fruit as Paul describes. The word is singular. We cannot be better in one particular without feeling the benefit in every direction. To be more loving is to be more brave, more honest and more just. The list is not exhaustive because man's spiritual attainments are capable of infinite combinations. The first three describe the life of the tree itself. Love is the sap from root to twig. Joy is the appearance of the tree, for they clap their hands. Peace is the quiet harmony of every part. This is a picture of the steadfast untroubled soul.

The second list describes our relations with others. Longsuffering, gentleness and goodness. God's love should be matched by our goodness. "Be ye kind one to another." The final list describes the fruits in our own hearts. Faithfulness, meekness, temperance. Every step in human progress has been a new control. Self-denial and self-control go hand in hand.

Fruit is the end to be achieved. This is the climax of the Spirit's labors.

PROMISE

*There is no day that hath not its reminder
Of love's sweet presence by the busy way;
There is no night that hath not for the finder
A dream of hope to usher in the day.*

*There is no journey that hath not an ending
To charm the pilgrim always homeward led;
There is no strife, where grief and joy are blending,
That peace hath not her pinions overspread.*

*There is no cloud that hath no sun to gild it,
No grief that hath not love to soothe its pain,
No ruin dire that man may not rebuild it,
No falling leaf that doth not live again.*

*'Tis but the earnest of a great endeavor,
The soul's diviner gift, the truest prayer,
The intent of a faith that falters never,
The promise of fulfilment unaware.*

PRAYER

WE thank Thee, oh God, for the abundance of the harvest fields, for gardens that bloom to Thy praise, and for trees that sing their anthems to the skies. How beautiful is the world that Thou hast created! Alas for the heart of man that has scattered unlovely seeds of hate and bitterness over the earth. We beseech Thee that Thou wilt cause Thy loveliness to grow within us that from our hearts may bloom the rich graces of Jesus Christ our Lord. We praise Thee for all good causes that have strengthened within the human heart whatever is right and worthy, but oh, help us to know that Thou alone by Thy Spirit canst make the vines of virtue to ripen and the lilies of truth to blossom. Come Thou, oh God, and build within each heart a garden that will bloom with Thy praise. Amen.

XLII

THE BOND OF THE SPIRIT

He loved them unto the end.—JOHN 13: 1.

THE closing chapters of this Gospel have been called the Holy of Holies of the New Testament. Their attraction is the love of Jesus.

Here one finds the explanation of His love. We naturally associate this word with our Lord. It is to Jesus what beauty is to a lily or perfume to a rose. He represented love as against every other force that sought to sway mankind. The world had never tried it before. It has been slow to try it since His day. The religion of Jesus is love,—a loving heart and a loving life. Was He not the Son of God? God is love, and Jesus is love eternal.

We find here the manifestation of this love. He loved "His own," and not for any arbitrary reason. They were covenanted with Him in service, and dependent upon Him like children. He loved the world, for He would have won all mankind to His side, but "His own" were the product of His heart and brain. They were carrying out His commission, however imperfectly, and on that eventful night He singled them out for special distinction. Not angels were they, nor sages from pagan groves, nor princes from the East, but plain men, humble, weak and erring. They were "in the world," a phrase which describes their inheritance and environment. Inside the upper room a few men pledged loyalty to their Lord. Outside, the multitude plotted His death. Are we "His own?"

Think of the measure of this love. They betrayed Him, forsook Him, denied Him, but He loved them "unto the end." This is divine love, and something of the love of Jesus must be in our hearts if we are to do His works. Love is reciprocal and we must love Him, too.

UNTO THE END

*Not angels were they from the land of dream,
Where in the cloudless day immortals walk
Of stainless robe, and in the stillness talk
With Him who weaves the slow evolving theme
Of Time: nor sages nourished at the stream
From ancient grottoes long forgotten sprung,
Where wisdom brooded when the world was young,
And taught her sons to find the fadeless gleam.*

*Plain men were they who stumbled in the light
For trusting not that love alone must lead,
Lusted for thrones when thorns encircled night,
And sorrowed not for Him whose heart should bleed.*

*Yet He, who found in such disguise a friend,
Loved them the while and loved them to the end.*

PRAYER

HELP us, our Father, to be constant in our friendship. Deliver us from deceit and low cunning, lest we betray those who have enriched our lives with love and liberality. May we find in Jesus the ideal friend, that serving Him all our days we may be like Him in the enduring ties which bound Him to His own. May we be worthy of the trust of our fellowmen, putting away from our hearts all jealousy and enmity, and by our Christ-like spirit let our lives become springs from which Thy love may flow. So do we pray for that wider friendship when all mankind will be one in Thee. Amen.

XLIII

SPIRITUAL HEALTH

I am come that they might have life.—JOHN 10: 10.

THE life of which Jesus speaks is the outstanding characteristic of His followers. What is that? It is not necessarily a giant intellect, for the simplest mind may know the Lord. Again, a Christian is not the product of a certain religious environment. To be trained in the lap of orthodoxy does not necessarily make anyone a Christian. Even Church membership is not always a badge of Christian experience. The Christian, also, is not simply a person of benevolent sympathies. There are charitable Mohammedans. Moreover, the Christian is not the absurdly emotional person who lays such emphasis upon the appendages of his religion. The ascetic is not the highest representative of Christ, and it is not essential to fill the earth with lamentations and forebodings of ill in order to lead the world to God. A man may be all of these things, and not be a Christian; he may be none of them and yet be a Christian; and he may be a Christian and yet be all of them.

Remember, science has never been able to define life in any sphere. Its origin is wrapped in mystery.

Professor Henry Drummond defines this Christian characteristic by saying that "Jesus is the Life." This is scriptural. (John 3: 16; 6: 4-5; 11: 25; 14: 6.) The same thought is found in the Epistles. (Galatians 2: 21, and Colossians 3: 4.) "Christ liveth in me," said Paul. Jesus can be in us and we in Him, as joy is in a smile, as beauty is in a face, as warmth is in the sunshine, as one circle may be within another. And this spirit of Jesus can change our thoughts and desires and lead us into higher fields of service, for He brings a right conception of God, a right relationship to Himself, and a right conception of His service. If this life is to prosper, it must have atmosphere, nourishment and exercise. These are the conditions of "abundant life."

IF

*If Thou, my Savior, watch over me,
I shall be happy to suffer with Thee.
Faith will be clearer, heaven be nearer
If Thou, my Savior, watch over me.*

*If Thou, my Savior, watch over me,
I shall walk safe through the shadows with Thee.
If death enfold me, Love will uphold me
If Thou, my Savior, watch over me.*

*If Thou, my Savior, watch over me,
Still shall I trust Thee, though eye cannot see.
Night will be brighter, burdens be lighter
If Thou, my Savior, watch over me.*

PRAYER

OH God, how beautiful is the world, and how pleasant to taste its abundance! The merry sun calls us to rejoice whether we work or play, and the soft rain falls like a benediction when we have borne the heat of the day. Darkness and light are both alike to Thee, oh Lord, and in the solemn calm of even as in the russet dawn we are with Thee. How gentle is the aroma of gardens where we walk with Thee, and in the luscious refreshment of the vines our hearts are mindful of the strengthening wine of Thy Spirit, that knows no season. The harvest fields are heavy with goodness, and Thy love adorns the green valleys. Open our eyes that we may see Thy footsteps upon the mountains and Thy marvelous handiwork in every leafy tree. So shall the fairer flowers of Thy Spirit bloom within our souls even like Jesus, full of grace and truth. Amen.

XLIV

THE SPIRITUAL RACE

Let us run with patience . . . looking unto Jesus.

—HEBREWS 12: 1, 2.

TO win at the Olympic games, held every four years in ancient Greece, was to win the admiration of the world. Paul writes of a race of infinitely more importance and of laurels more abiding.

Life is a spiritual race. It is not a matter of chance, but a destiny. Every one of us has responsibilities and opportunities which we avoid at our peril, and God has given us gifts to aid us in our task. In a race one sees muscles strained, veins standing out, and limbs extended. Runners do not go to sleep on the track. So is life serious. It demands enthusiasm. To idle along is to lose the prize. Success is difficult in any realm. It is not otherwise with the Christian life. Jesus endured the Cross.

Think of the runners. Paul mentions the mighty names of old. Are we like them? Yes! The apostle was writing to a humble people whose very names are forgotten. We may all be runners, if we will. The race is but a picture of the eternal struggle after the higher life. It is found in the humblest, and what sacrifices are made to attain it! Is not our race also dignified by the fact that Jesus went that way?

Who are the prize winners? They lay aside “every weight.” Races are not run in fur coats. If the Christian life is unsuccessful for us, what hinders us? “The sin that besets,”—that clings so closely to us. Whatever keeps us from our goal as Christians is our sin. They run with patience, looking unto Jesus. Impetuosity exhausts the athlete. He must conserve his strength, and shut his ears to the crowd. To look back is fatal. Forward is the goal. So must we look unto Jesus.

YOUTH AND AGE

*Up with the dawn
And with the birds awake,
The shadows gone,
A bath of dew to take,
And greet the azure sky
With dance and merry cry.*

*Ah, youth is morn
With pulses beating high,
The night to scorn
And time and tide defy,
For laughter shakes the trees
And love sings in the breeze.*

* * * *

*Ah well, the night
Hath come too soon, and yet
When fades the light
'Tis blessed to forget.
The shadows pale and slender
Enfold me soft and tender.*

PRAYER

WE praise Thee, oh God, for the life that flows through our veins, for the joy of existence and the hope that brightens our days. Teach us the privilege of looking upon the sun and of wearing its bloom upon our cheeks. How wide is the field upon which we may sport our strength and how sweet the springs of joy that gladden our senses. Forgive, oh Lord, that we should ever abuse the gifts of Thy love. Grant us Thy Spirit that under His control we may accomplish the purpose of Thy love. Let us not be content to stay in the waste places of corruption, but let us hasten to the purer heights where the sunlight of Thy presence shines for ever more. Let us not weary until we win the eternal crown. Amen.

THE SPIRIT OF CONQUEST

I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.—EXODUS 17: 9.

THE shriek and wail of battle mingled with the pleadings of prayer. Israel was going "over the top" to a final decision with Amalek.

Think of the faithfulness of Moses. True, he left the ranks of the fighters, when strong arms and clear brains were needed. But he had promised Joshua that he would thus pray, and Israel had proved the power of prayer. So should the place of prayer be sought by all who need God. No mention is made of the breaking of bread or the quenching of thirst. He bore the sufferings with the warriors below, until his hands were silhouetted against the pale evening sky. He was in earnest. Praying was as essential to victory as fighting.

What did it mean to the army? Well, the odds were against them. Amalek was their most insistent enemy. They were fighting on their own ground, too, whereas Israel was weary with the travel and the lack of proper nourishment. It was a critical hour. Today we have learned how much depends on morale at such a time. When Moses held up his hands Israel prevailed and when he let them down Amalek prevailed. Why? Not because of Moses, but because of the uplifted hands. Prayer was their stimulant for the battle, and the morale of the world today depends upon prayer. Spirituality alone is to save the world from insane anarchy. God alone can guide the world aright through the changes that are impending. We need men of prayer.

To the enemy, Moses, with a rod instead of a sword, on the mountain instead of in the valley, was a joke. They did not disturb that harmless old man. He was out of the fight. Thus do men argue still. But Moses was God's man,—representative of an invisible army, stronger than all the hosts of earth.

THE WILL TO PRAY

*Though I lisp like a child for his mother,
And falter as weak on the way,
I shall plead the unknown with a will of my own,
Till the break of Eternal day.*

*I shall pray till the triumph of reason
The reign of the right will proclaim;
Till the secrets of God shall be scattered abroad,
And the earth will delight in His name.*

*I shall pray till the unchanging season,
When the reapers of love will have done;
Till the Lord of the earth to my vision give birth,
And the goal of my seeking is won.*

PRAYER

FORBID, Lord, that we should ever desert the cause of truth. Let us be slow to doubt the sincerity of our fellows, and may we never question Thy goodness. If faith be difficult, grant us patience to wait for the revelation of Thy spirit, who will lead us into all the truth. Help us to live our faith that experience may confirm Thy witness in our souls. Give us courage to declare and defend what we have known of Thee, and with the years let our knowledge expand and our love ripen. Oh, may we never conceal our testimony, but let our lives be as lights that cannot be quenched! Forgive our faintheartedness, our inconsistency, and our bigotry. Grant us more of the Spirit of our Lord whose love is joy and whose service is freedom. Amen.

XLVI

THE SPIRITUAL HOPE

After my skin, even this body, is destroyed, then without my flesh shall I see God.—JOB 19: 26.

WHAT does religion say to metaphysical arguments with regard to immortality? Primarily, it is not concerned with them and finds very little to enthuse over. Let any Christian man ask himself, Do I base my belief in immortality upon a philosophy of the universe or upon a scientific formula? Not one in a thousand will answer in the affirmative. Immortality is not so much a matter of origins as a matter of motives. The religious thinker argues in this way, "I have an experience of God, confirmed in my everyday life, which rises far above any intellectual propositions which you may offer." And this is the simple, naked truth. Religious experience leaves biology far behind. It is entirely wrong to argue, for example, that there are faculties in human nature, useless in this life from a biological point of view, which await their sphere of usefulness in another life. The argument is well-meaning, but it leaves religion out of account. In the realm of religion all these finer faculties of a man's nature are exercised and through their witness immortality becomes a clear certainty. Religion says, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

Belief in life after death supplies a much felt need. The hope which Christ offers relieves the darkness. The burden of life is borne more bravely and death assumes a new form. Its separation loses its sting, for a place of reunion is promised, where love's lips will be unsealed. This has been the comfort of sorrowing souls throughout history. Somewhere there is an existence that answers the desire of the soul.

THE WELCOME

*When the tasks of life are ended
And the shadows gather o'er,
Father, keep me in Thy mercy,
Till I reach the silver shore.*

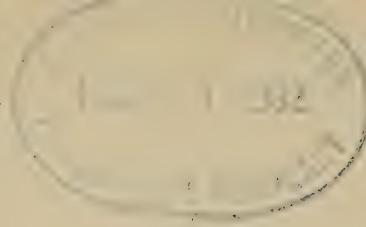
*May no fear destroy my vision
And no fretting wreck my peace,
But in sweet contentment sleeping—
Let me thank Thee for release.*

*Open Thou the golden gateway
Into yonder land of bliss.
Welcome Thou this suppliant pilgrim,
Let me feel my Father's kiss.*

*Oh to rest beside the river
Of Thy love eternal there!
Father, let this child that loves Thee
Evermore Thy dwelling share.*

PRAYER

ALMIGHTY God, on this day of Resurrection we remember Jesus our Lord. For His sacrifice on Calvary we thank Thee. May the thought of His suffering and shame subdue our selfish hearts, and in His spirit of patient surrender let us all seek Thee this day. Blessed are our eyes for we have seen the glory of the Lord. With glowing souls we look for His coming. His kingdom shall know no end. Oh, let the joy of His victory inspire us all that in the simple affairs of daily life, in our consecrated service, and in the last hour of death, we may look up and know that all is well. Oh, God and Father of our risen Lord and Savior, in Thee do we trust. Amen.



HUMANITY

XLVII

GOD AND MAN

What is man that thou art mindful of him?—PSALM 8: 4.

THE Bible is sometimes blamed for its unworthy conception of man. His sin has been exaggerated, we are told. Man, in the Bible, consequently is only depraved, demoralized, and pitiable. Does this Psalm support that view? “Thou hast made him only a little lower than the angels.” This is not a poetical conceit. It is a statement of the price that God sets upon you and me. Some scientific theories today seem to take delight in leaving man among the brutes. But the Bible lifts him far above that level. He is a citizen of an infinitely higher kingdom, and is the lord, monarch, and keeper of this world of wonders.

The subject of the Psalm is the superiority of God's revelation of Himself in and through man over every other form. The poet looks for evidence of God first in the heavens, where the clouds, like deep-laden ships, sail across the seas of space. God has set His name there. But all this immensity and beauty are voiceless apart from the mind to perceive it. To the lower creation, light and darkness are only physical sensations. But man has the power to apprehend God's meaning in all this. To him it is a sign, a seal, a covenant. The door of beauty opens, and he sees home to the heart of God.

But is there not a note of incongruity here? There is a conflict of faith and experience. Is not man sometimes brutal, vicious, and a prey to every evil passion? Are not the best gifts of God abused? This is not merely a misfortune. It is sin.

But God is mindful, says the Psalmist, and He visits man. This is not paying a call, but the coming of a dear friend. Thus did Jesus come into the heart of human need, and in Him the weakest are strong, and the vilest clean.

THE CONSTRAINTS OF LOVE

*As the harvests in the valley and the countless stars
on high*

*Serve the God that gave them being while the cen-
turies pass by,*

*Lord of Life, be my endeavor, as the swift years
hurry on,*

*That I bow in love's obedience in the darkness and
at dawn.*

*As the purple blooms around me smile in radiance
to the sky,*

*And the little birds sing anthems to their Maker as
they fly,*

*God of Love, before Thy presence let my life declare
my praise,*

*Thou art health and peace, my Father, in the rush of
busy days.*

*In the breath of Thy great Spirit all the universe is
born,*

*Only that which lives without Thee on the earth can
be forlorn.*

*Let me worship Thee, Almighty, in the temple of
the mind.*

*'Mid the light that shines within me truth Eternal
I shall find.*

PRAYER

ALMIGHTY God, whose handiwork is increasingly revealed with the passing of the centuries, we beseech Thee to bless all who labor with hand and head in the realm of business. May they be honest with Thee and with their fellowmen. Deliver them from the selfishness that would make slaves of others, and may they give a just reward for work well done. Save us all from carelessness, slovenliness, and unfinished tasks. Amen.

XLVIII

THE MEASURE OF A MAN

Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan.—GENESIS 13: 11.

IN an act of will every part of man's being is involved. Three elements stood out clearly in Lot's choice.

First,—It was the measure of his conscience. Her demand is that every action have moral quality. There is no universal subjective ideal, but certain constituents are essential to the moral ideal. Conscience has a threefold duty to perform. She brings us face to face with alternatives, she gives us the feeling of obligations, and she supplies the feeling of fitness, whereby we differentiate between good and evil. What of Lot? Of moral quality there was none in his choice, for he was selfish; of moral authority there is no trace, for he broke the simple law of decency in his treatment of his dearest friend, and of moral ideal there is not a vestige left, for he drifted from that day beyond the reach of prayer.

Second,—It was the measure of his character. Natural endowment is planted like a seed. By the process of adaptation and habituation the mind elects, accepts, and ratifies the ends which it will pursue. The blossom is tendency; the fruit is character. The past is a storage battery whose influences direct the course of life into channels of its own choosing. Egypt filled Lot's imagination. Somewhere his early training had been at fault. No man can cut himself off from his past.

Third,—It was the measure of his ideals. Choice is potential or final,—the former when it is the result of disposition, example, or environment, the latter when it is the result of deliberation. These are not inseparable, and in either case the end is never conditional. Life is a chain,—experience, choices, habits, and character. The poison of Egypt was in him. In Christ is our triumph complete.

THE PEACE OF GOD

*Oh heart of man with lawless discontent
Tormented, from thy turbid depths arise
In holy priest or pilgrim piteous cries
Of lonely failure, none may circumvent.*

*Within the seamless robe of life a rent
Appears, that shames thee sore. Since earth denies,—
Be not deceived,—what heaven alone supplies,
Beyond the mountains let thy prayers be sent.*

*Thou art the offspring of the Infinite,
And must be suckled at the breast of God.
Sealed are thine eyes nor can they know the light,
Until thou lookest from the sweating sod.*

*If knowing not Thy peace my soul must die,
Then to Thine altars, oh my God, I fly.*

PRAYER

OH, gracious Father, wilt Thou receive a bruised and and humble heart? How blessed is Thy promise, for Thou wilt sustain all who are oppressed by the burdens of life. Be near to me in the contemplation of my weakness. How deep is the pit of sin, how subtle the voice of the tempter, and how fierce the conflict unseen and unheard! God deliver me from the chains of passion! Have pity on my distress! Give me Thy hand, oh Father, that I may walk safely among mine enemies, and help me to trust when the darkness descends upon my soul. Deliver me from senseless regret and from the folly of repining. Take me with Thee into the victory of faith, and let me taste the joy of Thy salvation. Keep Thou my soul, oh Lord, and in the days of trial I shall not fail. Amen.

XLIX

AN UNPRINCIPLED MAN

The unjust judge.—LUKE 18: 1-8.

TWO persons are brought before our notice,—an unjust judge and a widow. He was a bad rascal. The description is that of a totally unprincipled man. The phrase was proverbial “ Fearing not God nor regarding man.” Now, in the Christian religion these two always go together. The Gospel of Jesus proclaims a unity of origin, need, and destiny. But this vain fellow thought himself too far above this poor soul to trouble himself about her for a moment. Ah, but our duty to God and our duty to our fellow men and women stand or fall together. Religion should purify all our relationships. Change in one’s attitude to one’s fellows is only a make-believe. That he was a convinced villain is seen from the manner in which he confesses it to himself. An ordinarily bad man is the last to confess his real character—even to himself—but this depraved soul took pleasure in his badness. It was a good joke. That is consummate villainy, indeed, when a man can pride himself in his sin,—chuckle over a fortune wrung from innocent hands, or wink at pleasure which spells the ruin of another. He helped her at last because he was annoyed by her appeals. Of course, the widow had no money to give him, and she had no influence to bring to bear upon him. Friendless, destitute, weak and poor,—a pitiable figure! Yet how definite she is. She did not come for gossip. We should pray like this. Too many go to God when they have really nothing to say. They are either drowsy or indifferent. How urgent she was! The Greek suggests that the judge was actually afraid of violence from her. So should our prayers be fervent. And God will answer us. The successful men are they who turn the spirit of this widow’s prayers into action.

CHARITY

*It is hard to be loving. The best gifts are slighted.
Ingratitude leaves the pure motive benighted.
There is always a fiend with a sneer for the stranger,
Or a temper that halts one's approaches with,—“Danger.”*

*If there's anything worse in this wide world around me
Than the chill of the loveless, whose glances confound me,
Have pity and tell me, for I would go roaming
And pass not their way from the dawn to the gloaming.*

*'Tis the duty of every true man and woman
To live with his fellows as if they were human,
For the judgment of heaven on saint or beginner
Will fall on the loveless,—the only true sinner.*

*Oh day of earth's happiness sad and appealing!
Oh fugitive dream, thou art ever revealing
One law for the whole,—that ye love one another,
Till man unto man o'er the earth shall be brother.*

PRAYER

OH, Lord God, who carest for the weak and the afflicted, we entreat Thee to be very near to those who are in danger at this hour. Where workmen are exposed to conditions that threaten life and limb, grant wisdom to exercise the necessary care and foresight. If some should suffer, spare them that they may soon be strong again to provide for those who depend on them for their daily bread. Protect all travellers by land and sea. Help them to accomplish their appointed tasks in safety and bring them again in Thy good providence to those who wait for their coming. In the Spirit of Christ help us all to plan the destruction of all that endangers health and happiness. All life is dear to Thee. Grant us the compassion of Jesus. Amen.

L

A MAN'S WORK

Let us not be weary in well doing.—GALATIANS 6: 9.

THREE is a principle in this text which is very important. We are all members of a larger whole. To attempt a life of isolation leads to stagnation and death. Society has helped to make us, and we in turn are helping to make society. As we seek our own highest good, we seek the highest good of others. This is true in more senses than one; anything less, and society suffers in proportion. Now, when Paul speaks of well doing, he is thinking of Christ's example. The influence for which he calls is to be a Christian influence; the service is to be the service of love. In this gift of love alone will individual and society alike find their highest development.

How full life becomes when we begin to live for others in the spirit of loving helpfulness! Unselfish cares and helpful activities give life a new meaning. Sympathy gives us new interests and makes us forget our own sorrows. In doing good to others, we are doing good to ourselves. Well doing is a beautiful word. But Paul issues a warning. "Let us not be weary." He is not finding fault, for he includes himself. He uses two words to express his meaning,—"weary" and "faint." The former suggests fear and the latter weakness. What causes this weariness? Paul is explicit,—fleshly lusts, pride, and forgetting Jesus. Under His inspiration alone can His people hope to bear the grievous burdens of love. Paul demands not merely well doing but continuance in well doing. It is to be the work of a lifetime.

Think of the promise! "In due season we shall reap if we faint not." At the appropriate time it will be ours, —that is, when the sowing is done. Here and now it will come to us, for nothing can equal the charms of a loving and generous personality.

LOVE

*How sweet it is to love!
No pilgrim walks alone,
No mortal drinks the flame
Or diets on a stone.*

*Kind words are food enough
To satisfy desire,
And gifts no trifles are
That kindle mercy's fire.*

*A brief good morn, a smile,
A tear in sympathy,
A handclasp warm, a page
From leisured memory!*

*The day is brighter; songs
Thrill the clear air of noon.
Night is pleasant dreamed,
And life soon spent,—too soon.*

PRAYER

FATHER, Thou knowest the secrets of the heart, even when we try to hide them from Thee. Grant Thy loving Spirit to those who are laboring at tasks that are unpleasant and for which they do not feel themselves fitted. Show them how to make the best of the place they now fill, and if it please Thee call them higher. But let not the drudgery spoil their natures, or ruin their work. Fighting bravely, may they be prepared for greater responsibilities in Thine own time. Enable them to remember Jesus who endured the Cross, despising the shame for the sake of others. Help us all to take our share of life's joy and sorrow, looking ever to that better country, where all questions are answered and the burdens of our mortal life are no more. Amen.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF A CHRISTIAN

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another.—JOHN 13: 35.

A. *The witness of Jesus.* “Herein is love,” said John, and no man can doubt God’s love so long as the Cross remains. There are three words to express this ideal love of Christ,—compassion, for Jesus took the needy world into His heart; mercy, for He forgave the guilty; and grace, which is love in its super-excellence, for the Son of God was the friend of sinners. Oh, for a heart to love like this!

B. *The witness of the Christian.* Love is the instrument for the accomplishment of His purpose. The world is incredulous of verbal testimony. Dogma has lost its attraction. Ritual is only an historical echo, but the violence of love no heart can withstand. There is a very plain reason for this. The one law under which we are all born is the law of love. The whole constitution of man is originally adapted to it. Love unlocks every door. “By this shall all men know . . . if ye have love.”

C. *The witness of the Church.* Even in her worst day the faithful remnant carried the Spirit of Jesus to the world. Two enemies have hampered her work,—denominationalism and sectarianism. The former implies difference of opinion, and the latter the spirit of enmity which underlies these differences. Christian union would be easy but for this uncharitable bigotry. Colorless uniformity is undesirable but Christian brotherhood is a glorious reality. Love is the divine organizer.

D. *The witness of history.* Christ’s footsteps can be traced along the shores of time even where the billows have broken. Slaves and wine glasses were of equal value to Aristotle. Rome at her best was Rome at her bloodiest. But the slavery of Calvary makes all slaves free. The world needs loving hearts. This is our Christian contribution.

MY PURPOSE

*One purpose and one only
Have I designed,—
For I, too, have been lonely,—
I would be kind.*

*The angry word unspoken
None will suspect.
The fluent promise broken
Faith will correct.*

*Let friends be the defenders
Around my heart,
And vainly shall pretenders
Play their low part.*

*Peace will destroy the towers
Of lust and hate,
And Hope will build her bowers
About love's gate.*

PRAYER

SPirit of Truth, Thy will is made known over all the world in the harvests and in setting suns. Yet how many forget Thee. Thinking to live without Thee, they suffer sorrows untold and lose more than they gain. Oh, turn their hearts to Thee that they may find peace and love! Remember those who are forgetful of themselves. They seek the lesser good. God, pity their shortsightedness and, if it please Thee, change their foolish ways e'er the day of life shall close. Oh, Father, may all men remember Thee every hour of the day, and find honor and confidence in Thy presence. Amen.

LII

THE CARE OF SOULS

No man cared for my soul.—PSALM 142: 4.

WHAT a pitiful wail! Nobody cares. How many hearts have fallen in the struggle of life for want of a friend! A stranger in church is lonely and unblessed even in the circle of God's family. In a far away city the traveler passes unnoticed till it seems as if he walked in a wilderness. The business office is a dungeon, home is a frozen zone, the battlefield is a shambles, when nobody cares. It is the wail of the wind around the door weeping sore for the inhumanity of man.

What a reproach! The Hebrew word suggests study, and this involves three things,—interest, attention and practice. We are interested in other things to the exclusion of God's chief concern,—the souls of men. Here is the responsibility of the Christian, that he take time to study the lot of the unfortunate and the oppressed. Nor is this enough, he must take steps to put into practice the knowledge acquired. All men are my brothers, said the Mohammedan, in the abstract, but they are only truly my brothers when they behave as such. But lo, the brutish selfishness, carelessness and arrogance that lie in wait for the lovers of men. "Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn."

What an appeal! It is the only thing worth caring for. Schools to make better citizens! Sport to make healthier bodies! Labor to make happier homes! Churches to make nobler souls! What of the lands that know not these things? Plague, exploitation and ignorance still take their deadly tolls. Did Jesus care? The answer is in the Cross. Does America care? The answer is in the army of patient toilers with Him at home and abroad. Yet still from the lands that sit in darkness comes the cry, "No man cares for my soul." Do we care?

VALUES

*Oh little babe, more precious thou
To God than all the pillared power
In this majestic shrine. The vow
Of virtue long outlives this tower,
Where hoary centuries in mossy shadows fall,
And distant voices through the verdant silence call.*

*Oh humble son of man beside
The altar, priests of unknown name
Have come and gone in pomp and pride.
An end there is to all the same.
But thou art found undying through the ages gone,
A changeless priesthood pleading for a happier dawn.*

*Faint not, oh weary pilgrim, here
Thy soul may be at peace. Be not
Enamoured of unholy fear,
For thou shalt find as thou hast sought.
Thine are the keys to guide thee through the holy place,
Where God will hear the broken hearted face to face.*

PRAYER

WE thank Thee, oh God, for the story of Thy love. Never has man been left without a Saviour, and in the fullness of time Thy purpose of love was revealed in Jesus, our Lord. As Thou hast cared for us, so do Thou enable us to remember the need of the world. Give us hearts sensitive to the cry of distress and hands liberal to relieve it. May we become bearers of Thy sympathy to the lonely and the suffering. In all good causes strengthen us that we may stand against all selfishness and greed. Grant us the vision of Jesus that we may see the better day for mankind when sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Amen.

LIII

CHRISTIAN STRATEGY

He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins are forgiven thee.—MARK 2: 5.

PARALYTICS are not healed every day. But Jesus attempted the impossible cases,—blind men, dead men, bad men, lepers and all. This story brings out the value of human aid in the restoration of the apparently impossibles. The faith of these good men is remarkable for two things. First, for what it attempted, and secondly, for what it achieved. The situation is plain,—a hopeless disease, a helpless cripple, and a trying journey through the streets. The crowds at the door were against them, for were there not others waiting for this healer's touch? Ah, but they were men of faith, eager, persevering, expectant. They were determined men with an intent and purpose such as lifts life above the commonplace. They were men of strategy, for was it not a clever move to find access through the roof? It was an inspiration. How patient they were, too! Opposition only encouraged them.

What men! God give us many more like them. Neither priests nor kings were they, but their record is written in God's book for ever.

Can you wonder at their achievement! This was a serious interruption and bordering on insult. Yet the Lord admired their courage and energy. Only one thing offends Jesus, and that is unbelief.

Before a word of explanation was spoken, the Savior blessed the daring visitor, but not as the latter expected. "Thy sins." Jesus put first things first. To raise the sinner from his sick bed without a corresponding healing of the soul is but to extend his lease on wickedness. Jesus prepared him for the further blessing. "Take up thy bed and walk." This was deliverance and victory complete and permanent. What a witness for Christ! This is victory that overcometh the world, even your faith.

WASTE

*Ah, this waste!
We tear the pages from life's diary
With frenzied haste,
Their empty tale repeated day by day,
And blindly swept by vagrant winds away.*

*No word, no deed
To mark their passing, not a hallowed prayer
For souls that bleed
Through life's dread agony! No welcome there
To help hope's pilgrims still to strive and dare!*

*Then let each year
A storehouse be in God's safe keeping,—not
For hate and fear,
But for love's treasures rare patiently brought
From marts, where love is neither sold nor bought.*

PRAYER

OUR Father, who didst give us life, we look to Thee for strength in the wear and tear of each passing day; preserve us in the hope through Jesus Christ that Thy will for us is best. How often we doubt to our own distress, for without Thee it is dark. Bless our loved ones that their years may be as the song of the reapers in the harvest. Graciously forgive the sins of all Thy children, and in the spirit of Jesus may we learn to serve Thee with a pure heart. For Thy Name's sake. Amen.

THE EXERCISE OF REASON

Prove all things: hold fast that which is good.

—I THESSALONIANS 5: 21.

PAUL resembles Jesus in this. Our Lord emphasized truth rather than mystery. "Ye shall know the truth" He said. Paul is following His Master in his counsel, "Prove all things."

The principle is right. He meant that they should use their reason. Some abuse it, but certain types will abuse anything. It is a God-given faculty like eyesight and is not to be despised. He meant also that they should find underlying reality. Gold is taken from rock and sand. Only the metal is of value. So much of religion is temporary and accidental. To prove it is to find what is eternal and spiritual. For example, what is Christianity? Not merely an institution with certain forms and ceremonies more or less pagan in their origin. Surely it is the organized attempt to apply the principles of Jesus to the individual and to society. Find the truth, says Paul. Again he meant that they should test their convictions. Many of our beliefs are an inheritance or are the result of indifference or intellectual sloth. Dogmatic Christianity may become an easy religion. Authority is the refuge of ignoble minds. See that your convictions rest on intelligence. This does not mean that the individual mind is the complete limit of reality. Pure individualism is offensive in any realm. We must consult the best mind of the age in its search after truth, in order to be in touch with the growing powers and principles of our age.

Results justify this attitude. Proving discovers what is good. It produces a well-balanced mind and a well-balanced life. Hold fast to it, says Paul. Do not wait until your whole scheme is complete. From bud to blossom a rose is beautiful. There is something that can be proved and which we can hold fast,—Jesus, His mind, His Spirit and His power.

SUCCESS

*Know thou art right, and fear no man.
Drive on, and let the world make way,
For some will meanly scorn thy plan,
And for its failure wait the day.
Then take thy rest: rise with the dawn.
The road is wide and long. Drive on!*

*Still guard thy soul. Answer not scorn
With scorn, but chain thine anger deep,
For ruin is of madness born,
And doth a vicious revel keep.
Hold to thy task, thy vision broad;
Be brave, and leave the rest to God.*

PRAYER

OH Thou who art the fountain of all wisdom, I come to Thee because it is so easy to err. I thank Thee for all the gifts and graces of my life and for the opportunities that make it so worth while, but I pray Thee to forgive my indifference. Teach me how to make the most of what Thou hast given me and let me never despise the faculties at my command. Thou hast given me a body. Let it not minister to my own selfish pleasure. Thou hast endowed me with reason. Let it not weave a veil of mystery around me to hide me from Thy presence, but let it build a tower to bring me to the gates of heaven. Thou hast entrusted me with a soul. Let me not clothe it in rags or starve it in a dungeon, but let it be the Master of my life under the guidance of Thy Spirit. Oh, may my life minister to Thy glory that many who sit in darkness may be led into the light of obedience by what I am and do. Let the Spirit of Jesus be my strength that with humble heart I may become more like Him with every passing year. Amen.

LV

THE VALUE OF EDUCATION

Train up a child in the way he should go.—PROVERBS 22:6.

GREAT movements have taken place during the last hundred years for the improvement of our race. Education has been the cause of them, and has been caused by them. Truly this is the day of higher education. What is the purpose of education? It is intended to make people think. The brain is a system of telephone wires. The individual must learn how to make the right connections. But he must think clearly. Words may be thoughts, but only in the hands of those who understand them. The mind should be like Roger Denham's picture of the Thames:

Though deep, yet clear, though gentle, yet not dull,
Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full.

To think independently is the climax of the process. The craze for authority is only temporary. Truth must be personal before it becomes universal. To find the raw material the student learns to observe as the naturalist finds friends on every roadside. He must observe the right things, distinguishing between the accidentals and the essentials, and he must observe the right things accurately, for there is a vast difference between one cipher and two ciphers in a city bank. Concentration is the key to the mysteries.

Now, such an experience cannot but influence character. It makes men eager to learn. It awakens interest in the broader realm of human affairs. It clarifies principles rooted and grounded in the universe. It enables men to make exceptions and to draw conclusions, for differentiation is the lance of thought. Thus education does not only teach. It trains. Such training makes thoughtful men reverent. The study of earth's wonders leads the mind up to God. The soul is in communion with the highest. It is not necessary to speak of religious education. All education is religious.

SEEKING

*Spirit of Truth, with whose divine persuasion
The soul is wooed above the dreams of sense,
Fold me about that thought may find occasion
To trust Thy leading when the dark is dense.*

*Thou that hast known the wisdom of the ages,
Teach me the secrets that my soul can bear,
That when the tempest of my blindness rages,
I may with them Thy consolation share.*

*Oh, bear with me that cannot understand
The truth that is a shadow in my mind.
Amid the changing systems take my hand,
Till in my wanderings certainty I find.*

*It is my life,—no less, and there alone
My soul shall learn to read the truth, for Thou
Hast set Thy mark not upon wood or stone,
But ever on the faithful seeker's brow.*

PRAYER

FAITHER, all life is dear to Thee, for it is the work of Thy hands. How beautiful is Thy world, that blooms and ripens in the summer season! May we be ever conscious that God is round us everywhere to encourage and sustain! Let our gratitude be so deep that every cup of water and every simple meal may be a sacrament. Bless Thou our homes. The little children are Thy special care. Guard them that no evil befall them, and when there is no human eye to see, may the loving hand of the Eternal Father preserve them from danger of body and soul. Spare us all together, young and old, for many years of service. Everywhere and always we are with Thee. Amen.

LVI

THE IDEAL CITIZEN

There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth.—REVELATION 21: 27.

THREE are two cities mentioned in this passage, Babylon and Jerusalem. They represent forces here on earth that are forever striving for the affections of men and women. The former is the city of curse and quarrel; the second is the city of health and happiness.

The City of Darkness is characterized by egotism, loud voice, loud clothes and loud purse proclaiming the vulgarity of its citizens; by vanity, for success-proud, purse-proud, and intellect-proud swagger about like pirates; and by self-complacency, for the leaders are perfectly satisfied with everything except when their own convenience is challenged. Such citizens are morally offensive, for this is the meaning of abomination. There are three stages in the development of sin. First, it is offensive to God; then to the world, for the ugly manifestation of evil is never popular, and last of all it becomes offensive to the individual himself. The life of deceit, pretence, hypocrisy fills the streets of the City of Darkness and conducts its business, for it maketh a lie.

The City of Light is ruled by citizens whose names are written in the Book of Life. What are the books that live? Only a very small proportion of the volumes that come from the press are remembered for long. Such books are the result of sacrifice, struggle, and anguish; and the citizens whose names are honored through history are such as have borne the burden of human need and have fought the good fight for justice and righteousness. Their names are in the Lamb's book of life. This is not a charter of names, merely, but a record of moral grandeur and achievement. Aye, more, it is the Lamb's book containing the record of such as have lived like Jesus. These are the ideal citizens of the City of Light.

THE WILL OF GOD

*It is the highest peak
Beyond whose dizzy crown
The eagle dare not seek
The sun, nor stars look down.*

*It is a long, low plain,
Beneath a summer sun,
Where never toil is vain,
And ne'er a curse is won.*

*It is a fortress bold,
Whose venerable walls
Stern tales of strife unfold,
When error's trumpet calls.*

*It is a silent night,
Where moonbeams drape the trees
To shield with silver light
Earth's sorrow on its knees.*

*Here hope ascends to greet
The rising of the sun.
Heaven's triumph is complete,—
"Thy will, not mine, be done."*

PRAYER

WE praise Thee, oh God, for the vision of Thy kingdom which we have learned of Jesus, and for the place that Thou hast given us in its progress. Take not from us our dreams of human betterment, but grant us Thy strength and wisdom to make them real. Forgive our selfish neglect of the interest of others and our indifference to the reign of evil in the world about us. Create in us the spirit of rebellion against wrong and help us to follow Him who alone hath overcome the world. Open our eyes to the needs of our own communities. Amen.

CHRIST'S SUPERSTATE

My kingdom is not of this world.—JOHN 18: 36.

THE Church in its material form has sometimes claimed the right to rule above all kings and governments. The visible Church and the Kingdom of God were thus confused, and the former became an empire not unlike the kingdoms of the world,—rich, despotic and unspiritual.

Now, Jesus said, “ My kingdom is not of this world.” His Church is not stone and lime, neither is His kingdom laws, priests, officers and ritual. The Church that is built on gold and silver can never truly serve the interests of the Kingdom of God.

This kingdom has a King. His name is Jesus, and to Him alone every knee must bow. Absolute authority He claims over every heart. His work is not done until He comes to His universal throne.

This kingdom has a constitution. It is written in the Word of God. In the sermon on the Mount, Jesus laid down the principles in keeping with which His people must order their lives, and it is their task to persuade the world into this obedience. The glory of this kingdom is not its revenues, but its people, by whose loving service the world is being saved from the curse of its folly. That their number be multiplied from pole to pole is the prayer of every loyal Christian.

This kingdom is to be measured not extensively, but intensively. It is a kingdom within kingdoms,—a world-wide superstate, which claims the first loyalty of all who follow Jesus. In its defense its citizens will make war against sin in all its forms. This is the Church militant. It knows no bounds of space or time, and of its increase there can be no end. Scattered abroad everywhere to the utmost isles of the sea its representatives labor, hope and pray, for the divine Sovereign has said that the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord.

THE ARMY OF GOD

*Oh, may the measured tramp of men
The peoples of the earth awake
To join the fearless fight again,
Till Christ His Kingdom take!*

*When terrors triumph o'er the earth,
And men forget the sacred things,
Remember Him who gave thee birth
To serve the King of Kings.*

*God gird thee with the armour bright,
The promise of His sacred Word,
To conquer not by thund'rous might
But by Thy Spirit, Lord!*

PRAAYER

HOW can we ever thank Thee, gracious Lord, for the multitude of friends, whose love makes life beautiful! For noble women who have taught us to think pure thoughts and for good men whose right hand has supported us many a time on the dangerous way. Spare them to us and may their number be multiplied. Help us to carry their example out into life with us that others may thank God for our influence. By word and deed may we make life pleasanter for some who may sorely need us. And oh, let the spirit of friendship possess every human heart, that hate, vengeance, and greed may wither away like autumn leaves. To this end teach us the friendship of Jesus, that, drinking at the fountain of His love, we may be continually refreshed to endure the bitterness and the disappointments of the way. Oh, Thou Eternal Friend, we trust in Thee for Thou dost fail us never. Amen.

LVIII

THE FIELD OF SERVICE

Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.—MARK 16: 15.

THESE are the crowning words of Christ's life, showing His faith in His own work, its future, and its value to humanity. They explain the missionary zeal of the Church.

A. *The sphere is outlined.* Geographically, the word means the material world in which we now live. Even in this twentieth century our Lord's command has not been accomplished. There are still vast territories across which the winds have not borne even the whisper of His name. The world also means the people in it, and how saddening it is to read of a handful of unlettered converts amid millions of opponents. Again the word may be used in a spiritual sense. An eminent Chinese leader declared that poverty was the curse of his country. He meant poverty of intellect and heart first, and Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." The word may also be applied to the world of affairs,—business, society, and the structure of civilization. Satan could still show to Jesus kingdoms subject to his evil sway. It is the aim of the Gospel to Christianize human relationships everywhere by bringing the nations to a knowledge of His will and persuading them to apply His principles wherever men and women mingle. The world can never be permanently won for anything good until it has been won for Christ.

B. *The sphere is defined.* "Creation" is very comprehensive and inclusive. All nature rejoices in man's salvation. Harvests are better, flowers prettier, and houses more securely built, when men learn to serve God. The Gospel is His wonderworking instrument,—beyond our power and with results beyond our dreaming. Therefore does the Church proclaim not "good talk" nor "uplift speeches," but "Jesus," who is able to save unto the uttermost.

THE BANNER

*Through flaming fields, where brave men fall to die,
The years have seen thy standard crown the plain
With victory. Proud boast, and yet not vain,
'Tis written thou didst never shameless lie
Torn and reviled, while conquerors passed by.
Ne'er hath unhallowed cause with heinous stain
Defiled thy soul, but scorning baser gain
Thou hast made covenant with God on high.*

*Oh, may thy triumph be unending, till
Justice around the world her temple build!
Sublimer victory awaits thee still,
Thy fairest dreams for human kind fulfilled.*

*Vaunt not thyself in carnage heaped and red!
In the soul's conflict lead as thou hast led.*

PRAYER

FAATHER Eternal, we rejoice today in the coming of Thy dear Son Jesus, our Saviour, into the world. We have felt the power of His cross in our lives, and have seen its triumph in our own day. Open our hearts to its influence yet again, that in the rebuilding of the waste places throughout the world the sons of men may be comforted, strengthened, and redeemed by its wonderful love.

Grant to us leaders who know the meaning of the sacrifice of Jesus, so that, led by His Spirit, they may direct the activities of the multitudes to honorable ends. We thank Thee for the great souls who have come again and again to lead our nation onward into the light. Let their number be multiplied. We beseech Thee, in these critical times, that our name may be a praise over all the earth. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

LIX

LEADERSHIP

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

—JOHN 1: 6.

ALL men are not equal in their endowments and attainments. There are some, in fact they are the majority, who are simply a mob to be led. The problem is with us, as with Jesus; they are "as sheep not having a shepherd." Completely adapted, man, in a perfectly evolved society, is a chimera, a city in the clouds.

Leadership is a matter of personality. This does not mean something physical. Little men have often been amongst the world's most illustrious leaders. It is not materialistic, the power of money is limited to what it can buy. It is not intellectual only; some able teachers are very dull. Neither is it purely ethical, for the saints are often too pious to be popular.

Leadership must be spiritual. The man sent from God is an instance. It means that such a leader has an overwhelming consciousness of the presence and supremacy of the spiritual in the affairs of life and of history. To him God is always victorious, however life may seem to contradict him. Such a man is brave, not with the braggadocio of the demagogue but with the sincerity of the saint.

The true leader must be a man. He must know the strength and weakness of his fellows, not as an anatomist but as a brother. The sham leader cares nothing for this. In fact he capitalizes their ignorance and shame. The world needs men whose rich endowment is the measure of their willingness to serve.

Such men are like John,—a gift from God. Greatness in the case of Jesus and John was spelled not in letters of gold but of blood. The God-appointed leader in the new world which He is creating must serve, live, and die for others. Such an ideal has waited long for sufficient expression. Today it is clamorous in the souls of men, and will not tarry.

THE INTERPRETER

*There is no meaning in events and lives,
If there be no divine Interpreter.*

*Then are men brutes, gorged with the fruit of spear
And claw, and fools are they to sheathe their knives,*

*For strength is victor. What are good and ill
But actors on an artificial stage
That pace the boards in purloined robes, and rage
Or whisper at a clever plotter's will?*

*If this be all, then let man die tomorrow,
No treasures are there for the soul to borrow;
And human kind will travel back again,
Degenerate, the sacrifices vain.*

*Ah! but by God whose Spirit seeps through all,
No good is lost should kingdoms rise or fall.*

PRAYER

ALMIGHTY God, we praise Thee for Thy guiding hand in history. Goodness and mercy have been as the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night for Thy people in all generations. Out of the darkness of our ignorance and shame the voice of Thy Son hath called us,—“Follow Me.” We thank Thee for all who have borne His cross, and who even unto death have sought to make the world better than they found it. Be pleased, oh God of our salvation, to bless those who sit in the high places, and who are charged with the care of the public good. Let them remember how Thou hatest robbery for burnt offering. May they hold their trust sacred, and ever be ready to make an accounting unto Thee. Oh, loving Father, Thou hast taught us that no man liveth unto himself. Bless our beloved land that her glory may not fade like a flower. Let her name be a praise upon the earth. Amen.

LX

THANKSGIVING

Giving thanks always for all things.—EPHESIANS 5: 20.

THIS verse is a pæan of praise. Some are surly in their praise and some superficial, but Paul pulls out all the stops of his organ and fills the heavens with the melody of his soul.

A. *The direction of his thanks.* Too many thank themselves. They are under obligation to no man. How blind they are! Some give credit to their heredity or environment, forgetting that these are in God's hands. Only to God should we render our utmost thanks. Two aspects of God's nature are emphasized; His power, for He is God, and His love, for He is Father. The first emphasizes the "having" and the second the "giving."

"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," says our text. Paul is jealous for Jesus. Without Him we miss the highest in life. Only in His Spirit can we make the best use of God's favors. Only with His love in our hearts can we use the gifts of heaven for the good of men and the glory of God.

B. *The occasion of his thankfulness.* "Always." We set apart one day of the year for thanksgiving. It was intended to be the symbol of all-the-year-round thanksgiving. Too often it is only a holiday. The note of praise is lost in many instances. Paul says "for all things." However humble it be, loving thankfulness sweetens the table. However contrary to your expectations the gift may be, offer thanks unto God, and however familiar it be. Bread and butter, birds and flowers, light and air are life's essentials. Not miracles of deliverance from death, but the simplest details of life are most worthy of our thanks.

C. *The expression of it.* Paul's word is the sweetest in the New Testament. It symbolizes the spirit of praise. Thanksgiving is an affair of the heart. Then we give thanks at all times, in all places, and for all things.

TREASURE

*I asked of life the fairest flowers
Through all the earth abroad,
And garlands came from heaven's bowers,
Fresh from the land of God.*

*I sought my treasures night and day
Where truth deep buried lies,
And soon a million jewels lay
Before my dazzled eyes.*

*I knocked at virtue's guarded door,
When rose the misty dawn.
And there, where shadows were before,
Eternal lovelight shone.*

*For as you ask so is it given,
Or seek, so will you find.
Oh knock, and God will open heaven,
So wonderfully kind.*

PRAYER

HOW gracious are Thy dealings with us, Father, and how deep the debt we owe to Thee. From Thy hands has come our life and in Thy hands we find the generous support of all our being. Bountiful are the harvests that supply our physical needs so that we are able to labor worthily in the service of our fellowmen, but oh, how rich the treasures of Thy grace for the satisfaction of our spiritual needs. In our joy and in our sorrow Thy love is unfailing and for the hunger of our eager hearts we take from the hands of Jesus the bread of His life. We praise Thee, oh God, for the years crowned with Thy loving kindness, for what our eyes have seen, our ears have heard, and our lips have tasted of all Thy goodness. Help us to give Thee back Thy gifts again in consecrated life and loving service. Amen.

LXI

THE MODEL WORKMAN

I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day.—JOHN 9: 4.

WORK is an old word and is found in every language. The model workman—

A. *Enjoys his work.* Slavery makes work a curse. A whip does not encourage men and a wail is a sorry substitute for the song of the reapers in the harvest. Men must be free to choose their sphere of labor if they are to enjoy it. Nevertheless, Jesus said “I must,” but it was a happy compulsion, for He commanded His joy to His disciples. Many men would give all they are worth to know such quiet of soul, but the world is too much with them. Happy is that workman who finds his daily duties pleasant to his hands.

B. *He respects his work.* Jesus worked with God. The Heavenly Father is ever caring for His children and planning their welfare. To work for God, therefore, is to build a better world and to make humanity happier. What bounty, beauty, and grace have been planted through the ages by the Eternal hands for man’s reaping! God’s service is a work of love. It is not surprising, therefore, that Jesus gloried in His partnership,—“I must work the works of him that sent me.”

Life is a conflict of ends. Is it to be self or others? Work for work’s sake has no message for men. The goal which it serves must be inspiring and ennobling. Even the humblest toiler in the field of the world may coöperate with Jesus. He who is hired by God is the model workman.

C. *He makes the most of his work.* “While it is day,” said Jesus. How soon it passes! Like a cloud, a breath, or a shadow, says the Bible. But let no man hurry. This means blundering. He prayed well who said, “God give me work till my life is done and life till my work is done.”

THE LOAD

*The burden always seems too great
When first I bend beneath it.
I grumble at the heartless fate
That blindly did bequeath it.*

*Then like an untaught child I moan
And spoil the day with fretting,
Till I am left unloved, alone,
Life's better part forgetting.*

*I sit awhile to think, and then
I growl and frown no longer.
Yet though my heart is light again,
'Tis not that I am stronger,*

*But simply that my biggest load
Is just my selfish sorrow.
If love will light the longest road,
Why needless burdens borrow?*

PRAYER

OUR strength is in Thee, oh Lord. Thou hast given us work to do and hast fitted us for our tasks. Help us to do with our might what our hand findeth to do. We praise Thee, too, for the rewards of our industry,—for health of mind and body that comes through the exercise of brain and brawn, and for the supply of our physical needs through our sowing and reaping. Help us not to become too engrossed in our toil, lest we forget our spiritual needs. Unite us, Father, in high endeavor to make Thy kingdom real. We thank Thee for Jesus who labored in His day. May we possess His Spirit so that we may gladly bear our share of the world's toil and find our highest reward in Thee. Amen.

LXII

CHRISTIAN INTERNATIONALISM

The field is the world.—MATTHEW 13: 38.

YOU have seen the clouds drifting across the sky, great, snowy temples that vanish mysteriously at the touch of the sun. Uncertain, indefinite, unstable they are! Internationalism has been regarded by many as sharing the nature of cloudland, but, lo, the cloud is taking a new form and finding a foundation upon the earth.

We are beholding today the rise of the international mind. Jesus saw beyond the bounds of the little nation within which He was born. His good works were not confined to His own people. The faith of a Gentile was commended. He scorned the Jewish pride of birth in so far as it stood for monopoly of divine favor. "Other sheep have I that are not of this fold." "Go ye into all the world." These words were present to the consciousness of the Early Church and in the spirit of them Paul went far and wide, proclaiming the kingdom of the Son of God. Today we are becoming aware of the existence of other nations. We are acquiring the power to imagine the conditions under which they live, and are beginning to learn from their longer history.

Again there is the international spirit. The sons of the kingdom, said Jesus, are the seed. Now, seed dies that harvests may ripen. That is to say internationalism is not a matter of politics. It is not a theory. It is a willingness to sacrifice for the larger end. It says not "me" and "mine," but God, truth, justice, a better world, and a better humanity. This is the spirit of Christian missions, and the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the new world.

Then there is the international conscience. Jesus viewed the clash between good and evil in the movements of history, as He spoke, but He saw also where the victory would lie. All human relations must be Christianized. Internationalism is not in dispute. It is a fact.

THE NEW DAY

*The day of the dreamer has come,
And mountains that pray at the dawn
Shall march with the beat of the drum,
E'er ever the vision be gone.*

*And, oh, for a time and a time
The cities ye built in the skies
Have sought for a soil and a clime,
That faith not forever denies.*

*Oh man is the heir of his dream
To wander the universe vast,
And find that the unerring gleam
Will float into noonday at last.*

PRAYER

HOW comforting it is, our Father, to trace Thy living hand in all the events of our life. Here and there Thou didst intervene to save us from the waywardness of our ignorance. Though we did not know, yet Thou wert near. Oh, how inspiring to think that Thou dost lead us still. Enable us to coöperate with Thee to the end that we may serve Thee aright. We are glad to have suffered, rather than to have sinned. Oh, God, our hope is in Thee, and we will not fear what men may do. Our hearts tremble for the wickedness of the world. How great is the task of redeeming mankind! If it were ours alone, then would we cease to struggle. But there is nothing impossible with Thee. Wilt Thou use us, Lord, in the harvest fields of truth? Help us to be in earnest, and may we be willing to labor long even until the shadows fall. Amen.

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